

GX[®]

THE GUARD EXPERIENCE

SEPTEMBER 2007
VOLUME FOUR ISSUE EIGHT

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IN THE GUARD**

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FOR THE 39TH BCT**

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SAVED WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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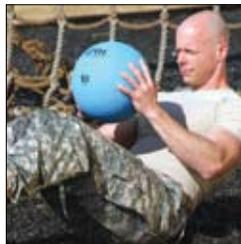


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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

BG Douglas B. Earhart



Greetings, Citizen-Soldiers, from Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo!

Under the auspices of Operation Joint Guardian, the 29th Infantry Division is lead nation for the Multi-National Task Force (East) of the Kosovo Force (KFOR). Since the KFOR 8 rotation assumed authority for this mission in early December 2006, the colors of the "Blue and Gray Division" fly high each day alongside the NATO flag and the Flag of the United States of America. This mission is multinational with representatives from six countries and includes units from the active Army, Army Reserve and Air Force, but it is the National Guard on point, maintaining peace in a land where conflict and war have been common ground for centuries.

The National Guard is getting it done because we bring civilian-acquired skills to the mission set each day, and our ability to provide two sets of skills in every Soldier enables the Guard Soldier to do more in a place where every possible improvement and infrastructure is needed. We also bring the spirit of working together to each mission we have. As National Guard members, we respond at home to natural disasters and federal emergencies and we all have worked with other nonmilitary agencies as a matter of routine. Our ability to work together and communicate is yet another facet of the Citizen-Soldier with civilian skills that enhances mission accomplishment.

In Kosovo, while we are maintaining the safety and security here, the 29th Infantry Division brings a unique symbolism to this place directly related to current tensions between the ethnic Albanian and Serbian populations. We like to share the story of the 29th Infantry Division patch, which symbolizes the fact that the division was composed of regiments from Virginia and Maryland that had fought on both sides of the American Civil War.

In fact, on the ground today patrolling alongside each other are units that have battle streamers from the same battles of the Civil War. 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry from the Stonewall Brigade in Virginia and 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry from Massachusetts, whose lineage is among the oldest in the United States, fought against each other during those four years of war, yet these regiments today share the same patch, the same mission and are maintaining a peace that is unprecedented here.

The 29th patch represents two cultures divided in war but who found peace through diversity. This example is one that Soldiers can use daily in their patrols when talking to local Serbian and Albanian populations. The people here know what the National Guard is and what the National Guard can do because it is visibly evident every day.

Be proud of your National Guard heritage because it is who you are! As we move through this challenging period of conflict in our nation's history it will be noted that National Guard men and women from all states and territories were on point for the nation, in Kosovo, in Iraq and in hundreds of other locations around the world. Thanks for all you do!

Brigadier General Douglas B. Earhart
Commanding General
Multi-National Task Force East

**Be proud of
your National
Guard heritage
because it is
who you are!**



We want to hear from you!
Send your questions or comments to:
feedback@GXonline.com

MAGAZINES FOR THE MENTORS

Dear GX Team,
I was quoted in your first or second edition and am now asking for your support forward. I am an Alaska Army Guardsman, AGR, and was allowed to volunteer for this unique mission. I am stationed through next spring at Camp Taji, Iraq, as a member of one of the new Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (EPRT). I am assigned with 1st BCT, 1st CAV DIV (IRONHORSE) as the Governance Team Leader. Part of our job is to mentor and work with local government members, here they are called Nahia, and Qada, equivalent to neighborhood councils and city councils in the U.S. The great city of Austin, TX, is our BCT's host and is helping us with some of

the key points of local government and how it works. Our team was called up for the U.S. State Department and filled from U.S. State, DoD, DA civilians, Navy, Army Guard and Army Reserve, only nine members for our team, and we are fully embedded with our host BCT.

My request is for 10 copies of GX magazine, per edition, to be mailed here while I am here to share with my teammates and other BCT members.

Thanks very much,

COL Mike Bridges
1BCT, 1CD ePRT IRONHORSE
Governance Lead

COL,
YOU BET! No problem at all, sir. I will put that request in immediately and send you the July issue today. Thank you for your service, sir. Your mission is critical and we appreciate all you do for our country. We're truly honored by your request.

CULTURAL CONCORD

As part of the Multinational Forces and Observers, Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, we share [a mission] with many Soldiers from different countries around the world, here in just one place. It is amazing how cultural diversities [didn't stop] our performance together as one team, raising our patriotism and pride to the highest level, in this special mission.

SGT Francisco J. Santiago
HHC 1/296th INF. BN
Puerto Rico Army National Guard

SPREAD THE WORD

WOW! I read your latest issue of GX, and I think you need to send every senator a copy so they can read about all the patriots in the USA.

Steven Baumhover
Dedham, IA

GET ON YOUR SOAPBOX AND GET A **FREE T-SHIRT**

American Soldier™ Presents Rants and Raves T-shirt Giveaway

Tell us what you think of GX and we'll randomly select one winner each month, out of the first 100 responses, to receive a free American Soldier T-shirt!

Here's how to do it:

1. Write "T-shirt Giveaway" in the subject line of an email.
2. Sound off on any GX-related topic. For example, tell us what you think of the latest feature or the magazine as whole!
3. Send your email to: feedback@gxonline.com

September's Winner:
Steve Baumhover of Dedham, IA





ON THE COVER

A couple enjoys the moment of being back in one another's arms after the long-awaited return of Minnesota Guard's 1/34th BCT "Red Bulls" from an extended deployment in Iraq, July 19th, 2007.
PHOTO BY SGT LYNETTE R. HOKE

Back On The Scene

CPT Tim and I just returned from the National Guard Bureau's first-ever Soldier and Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year ceremony up in DC. The captain had been down at Fort Benning in Georgia covering the competition—running on pure adrenaline, chasing after the Soldiers like a wild man with a camera. We rendezvoused in DC for the meet and greets. It was an amazing trip and we, of course, met many amazing Soldiers: including two photographed in this issue's feature "Servicio Honorable" (p.36), paying tribute to Hispanic Americans in the Guard. SSG Jorge Garcia and SPC Richard Olmedo are, respectively, NCO and Soldier of the Year finalists from the state of California—and 100% top-notch Guard members. SPC Olmedo has been in the Guard less than one year and he's already made it to this competition! I can't think of two finer individuals to lead off this feature, a perfect picture of the proud service of Hispanic Americans today.

And what about the state of Arkansas! Wow. When I got back in the office, I found we actually had more Arkansas news than we could print. Folks would have thought this was AX: The Arkansas Experience. But hey, they clearly harvest the HOOAH down there. I was amazed when I heard about yet another Silver Star for the 39th Brigade Combat Team (p.18); I literally ran around the office telling everyone in my path! And what about the 875th Engineers finding their 1,000th IED (p.20)! I think we all ought to take a moment to think about how many lives these Soldiers have saved with their discoveries. Absolutely heroic. Additional chunks of Arkansas heroism can be found on GXonline.com, including the story of 1LT George Collins and how he received the Bronze Star with Valor device. Be sure to check that out.

This issue also marks the end of an era of sorts. With the long-anticipated return of the Red Bulls to American soil, our nearly two-year coverage of them comes to a close. We have followed the men and women of the 1/34th from Mississippi to the Middle East, profiling their acts of heroism along the way and giving you an insight into the deployed Guard experience.

One last thing, in our Rants and Raves section (p.7), we have a new promo. We're giving away a free GX shirt to one lucky person who writes in to tell me what they think of GX. Can't wait to hear from you!

Thanks,

Keith Kawasaki



WWW.GXONLINE.COM

MISSION: To celebrate and support the Soldiers and families of the National Guard. To provide today's Army National Guard members with information for becoming a better Soldier and better citizen. To encourage and assist Guard Soldiers in maximizing the benefits of their military career as well as their personal and family goals.

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THUMBS UP

New Hanover, NJ

Soldiers from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment, Maryland Army National Guard, participate in a joint urban cordon and search exercise as part of the army readiness and training evaluation program July 24, 2007, in the mock city of Balad at Fort Dix, NJ

Photo by SSG Russell Lee Klika





RECON >>>

UNDER FIRE

Guernsey, Wyoming

Soldiers from the Wyoming Army National Guard's 115th Field Artillery Brigade come under fire during a convoy lanes training exercise at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center.

Photo by SPC Brady Berdahl









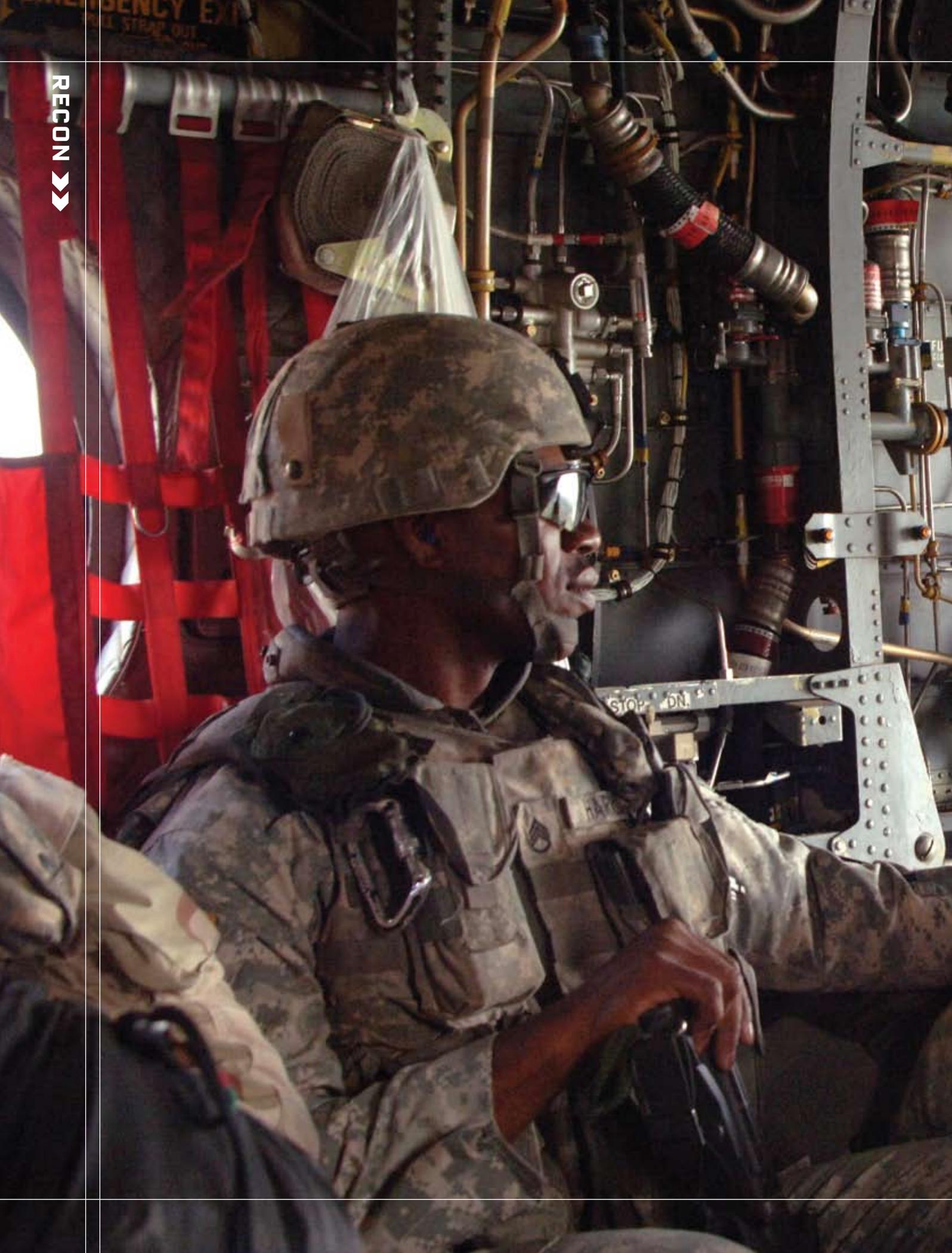
FIRE IN THE SKY

Michigan

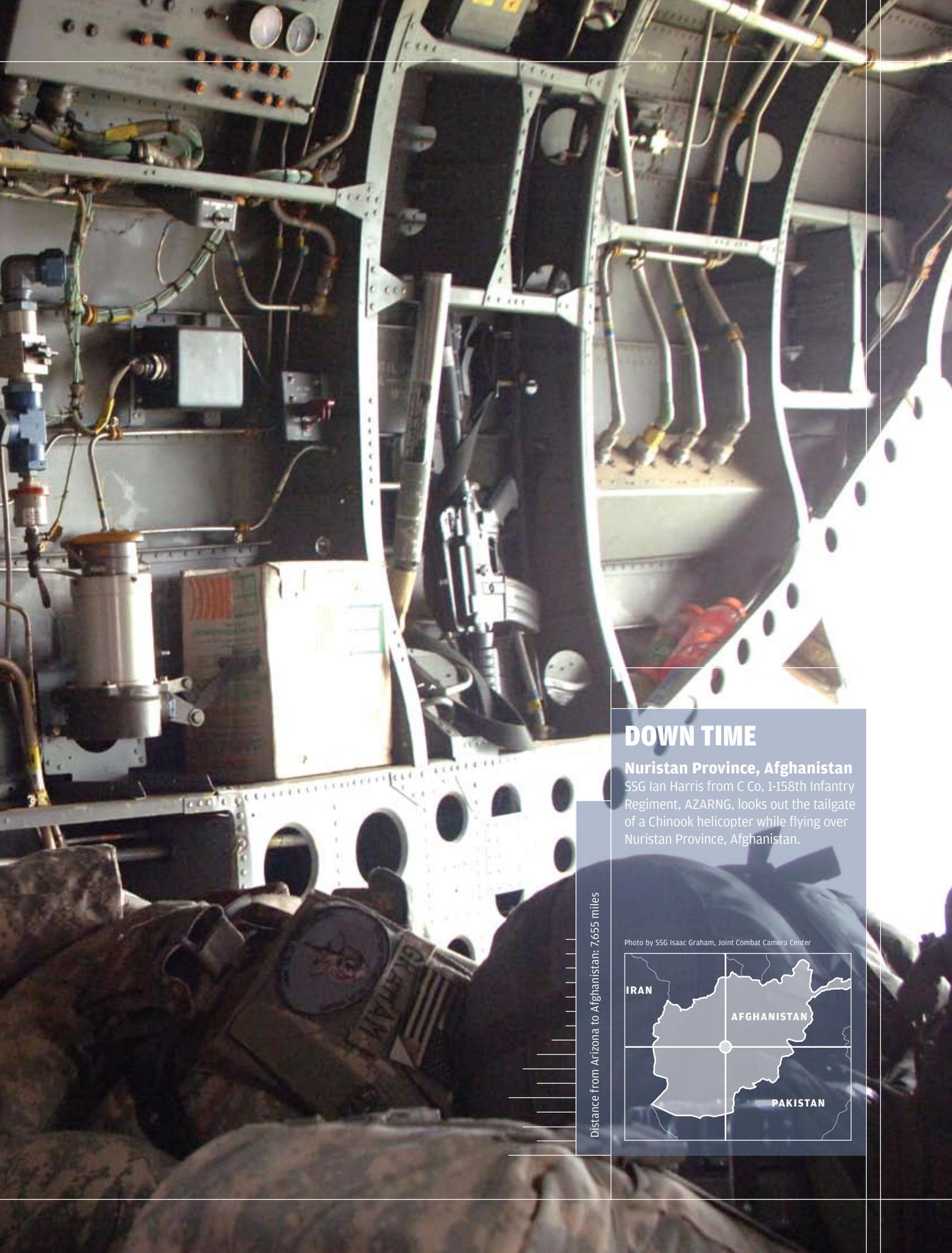
The Michigan Army National Guard uses a bambi bucket, an aerial firefighting tool suspended below a helicopter, to extinguish a fire 10 miles from Tahquamenon Falls State Park, MI, Aug. 8, 2007.

Photo by SSG Helen Miller





RECON >>>



DOWN TIME

Nuristan Province, Afghanistan

Ssg Ian Harris from C Co, 1-158th Infantry Regiment, AZARNG, looks out the tailgate of a Chinook helicopter while flying over Nuristan Province, Afghanistan.

Photo by SSG Isaac Graham, Joint Combat Camera Center



Distance from Arizona to Afghanistan: 7,655 miles



A MOMENT'S NOTICE CPT John Vanlandingham, left, stands ready with (left to right) SSG Shawn Buffalo, 1LT Mark Bourgery and an Iraqi National Guard captain while waiting for word to move forward from MAJ Christian Neary.

FOURTH SOLDIER FROM 39TH BCT EARNS SILVER STAR

By SGT Rick Fahr, 119th MPAD

FORT CHAFFEE MANEUVER TRAINING CENTER, AR—CPT John F. Vanlandingham's mission for OIF was to train Iraqi National Guard (ING) troops to defend their country. When insurgents attacked the convoy, he and his comrades were traveling in, CPT Vanlandingham ignored his own personal safety and saved the lives of several ING troops by venturing numerous times into the danger zone to help them escape.

That "never leave a troop on the battlefield" philosophy earned CPT Vanlandingham a Silver Star.

"The Iraqis to me were like American Soldiers, and I wouldn't do that to them, either," the captain said. "We put the time and effort and countless hours into training them. We had the duty to help them as much as we would have a fellow American."

The captain, a member of 1st Battalion, 206th Field Artillery Regiment, of Arkansas' 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, served

as an ING advisor. He was presented the Silver Star during a ceremony August 12, at Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center.

The citation for the award, the Army's third highest for valor, touted CPT Vanlandingham's "exceptional meritorious bravery."

Documents relating to the award indicate that CPT Vanlandingham was leading a convoy from an oil refinery back to a U.S. post north of Taji on November 14, 2004. Included in the convoy were about 50 ING

troops in several vehicles. A delay in the convoy's movement allowed insurgents an opportunity to prepare for an ambush along the roadway—the only available route back to the U.S. post.

"The [IED] went off two vehicles behind me," the captain noted, explaining how the ambush began.

He explained that the vehicles the Iraqis were traveling in each held nearly two dozen troops and did not have protective armor, thus making them susceptible to IED attacks.

Seconds after the first bomb exploded, another IED detonated near the vehicles and several insurgents began attacking with small arms.

CPT Vanlandingham's vehicle, the convoy lead, escaped the ambush and motored to safety, but he and troops with him immediately realized that the Iraqi soldiers were caught in the attack.

"I was the only cadre there who was in charge of the Iraqis, so we turned around and went back," he said of his decision to return to the fight.

We had the duty to help [the Iraqis] as much as we would have a fellow American.—CPT John F. Vanlandingham

The captain directed American forces to suppress the enemy fire as he made his way into a ditch and back toward the Iraqi troops. He retrieved several wounded and at least one deceased Iraqi soldier, along with several weapons. The Iraqi troops had suffered severe injuries, and without quick medical attention, they would likely have died.

After accounting for all troops, CPT Vanlandingham reorganized the convoy, leading the way back to post to secure medical treatment for the wounded.

At the award ceremony, BG Richard Swan praised the captain's actions.

"Without a doubt you have proven that you are a Soldier and a Warrior. God bless you," he commented.

A letter penned by MG William Wofford, adjutant general of Arkansas, honored the Soldier's "dynamic leadership."

"Your discipline and professionalism serve as an example to your peers and have earned for you the respect of your superiors. You are a fine asset to the Arkansas Army National Guard," the adjutant general wrote.

Despite the kind words, CPT Vanlandingham downplayed his "hero" status.

"I really appreciate what the people have done to give me this award," he said. "I'm no hero. I just did what I had to do that day to survive and to have my fellow Soldiers survive."

CPT Vanlandingham is the fourth Soldier to earn the Silver Star during service with Arkansas' 39th Brigade during OIF II. The Silver Star was posthumously presented to the Family of SGT Russell "Doc" Collier of Harrison, AR. SGT Collier, also a member of the 39th's 1st Battalion, 206th Field Artillery, gave his life in an attempt to save a fellow Soldier during the same deployment.

1LT Michael McCarty of Bono, AR, and SSG Matthew Zedwick of Corvallis, OR, were both presented the prestigious award for their heroic actions in combat as well. 1LT McCarty served with the 39th's 3rd Battalion, 153rd Infantry. SSG Zedwick served with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry of Oregon's 41st BCT. SSG Zedwick's battalion served with Arkansas' 39th Brigade during the mobilization. **GX**



HONOR CSM Steven Veasey (left) of the 39th Infantry BCT congratulates CPT John F. Vanlandingham for receiving a Silver Star Medal.

ARKANSAS ENGINEERS FIND 1,000TH IED

By SSG Chris A. Durney, 875th Engineer Battalion PAO

CAMP STRIKER, IRAQ—The Arkansas Army National Guard’s (ARARNG) 875th Engineer Battalion has found and cleared more than 1,000 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) since deploying to Iraq last September, saving countless civilian and military lives.

Friday, July 13, proved to be a lucky day for SGT Joshua R. Beasley and 2nd Platoon, 131st Engineer Company. The eagle-eyed Soldier spied an IED along a portion of a major military supply route (MSR) and civilian commerce artery in central Iraq. SGT Beasley, a 25-year-old native of Cardwell, MO, was serving as truck commander of an armored Buffalo when he spotted the potentially deadly bomb.

The 875th deployed to Iraq in late September 2006, and is tasked with a critical assured mobility mission that includes route clearance, route sanitation and rapid crater repair. The 500-man battalion includes troops from Arkansas, Indiana and Vermont National Guard units. The battalion’s Alpha Company, 2nd Platoon, made the 500th find and clear in March of this year.

“We take great pride in being the company to find and clear the 1,000th IED,” said CPT Jacob Roy, 131st company commander. “We take our mission very seriously and head out every day to do the best job possible. I couldn’t be prouder of 2nd Platoon and our guys.”

Once SGT Beasley identified the IED, the patrol moved to a safe distance and called in an explosive ordinance detachment (EOD) to render the bomb harmless. The patrol then continued on with the late-night mission, which lasted more than eight hours. The 131st operates out of Camp Striker near Baghdad. In the vehicle with SGT Beasley were SSG Jason Hood, the patrol leader; SPC Stephen Gillespie, the driver; and SPC Samantha Gibbs, the patrol medic.

“This is a real milestone for the 875th and for our assured mobility mission,” said COL Patricia Anslow, battalion commander. “Sergeant Beasley’s eagle eyes saved lives; I’m extremely proud of him and all of the incredible Soldiers of the 875th. These men and women have done an outstanding job and are making a difference every day.” **GX**



DISTINGUISHED ENGINEER
SGT Joshua “Eagle-Eye” Beasley is congratulated by COL Patricia Anslow for making the battalion’s 1,000th IED find and clear.

VICTORY MAP >>>



UNITED STATES



38 00 N, 97 00 W (North America)
Capital: Washington, DC
Population: 301,139,947

ALABAMA

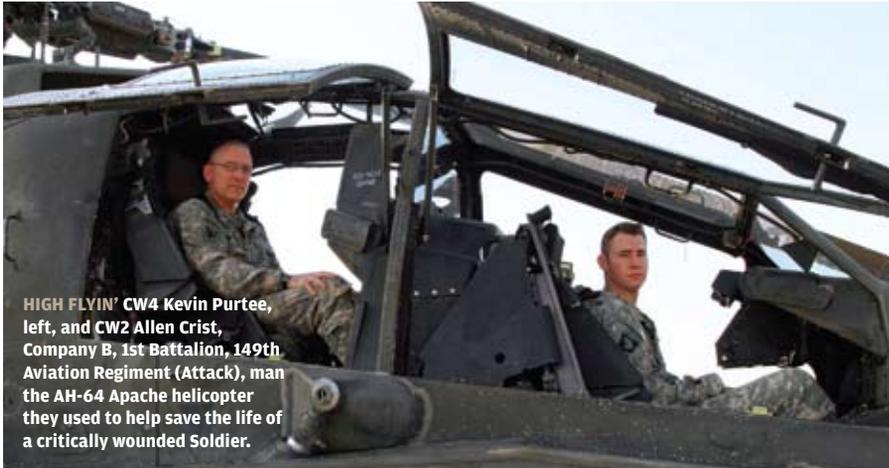
After serving more than a year on active duty in Iraq, 125 members of the 226th ASG, based out of Mobile, returned to the U.S. on Aug. 1. They had a welcome-home ceremony on Aug. 4.

ARKANSAS

On July 14, the Arkansas National Guard Readiness Center in Stuttgart was renamed in honor of the late LTC Barney Smith, former commander of the 39th Support Battalion, with more than 32 years of service in the National Guard.

CHRIS A. DURNEY

PILOTS' RISKY FLIGHT SAVES CRITICALLY WOUNDED SOLDIER



HIGH FLYIN' CW4 Kevin Purtee, left, and CW2 Allen Crist, Company B, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment (Attack), man the AH-64 Apache helicopter they used to help save the life of a critically wounded Soldier.

By SSG Lorin T. Smith, 36th CAB Public Affairs

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, IRAQ—Two pilots from Company B, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment (Attack), 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, risked their lives in an unorthodox casualty evacuation to transport a critically wounded Soldier in an AH-64A helicopter during a firefight in Ramadi, Iraq, on June 30.

CW4 Kevin Purtee and CW2 Allen Crist, Apache helicopter aviators flying their last combat mission, are credited with assuring a Soldier of Company A, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, of prompt medical care by their actions. The Soldier had been shot in the face and the arm, and needed to be evacuated from a raging battle near Donkey Island in Ramadi.

The pilots learned that more than 40 minutes had elapsed since the ground unit had called for the medical evacuation aircraft to transport wounded Soldiers to the hospital at Camp Ar Ramadi. CW4 Purtee, from Houston, TX, was the pilot, which is commonly referred to as the “back-seater.” CW2 Crist, from Warrensburg, MO, was the co-pilot/gunner, or “front-seater.”

CW4 Purtee asked CW2 Crist if he felt comfortable giving up his seat for the critically wounded Soldier for the quick flight back to the camp.

“Absolutely,” CW2 Crist answered. CW4 Purtee made the decision that to save the Soldier’s life, CW2 Crist would fly on the wing of the aircraft on the way to the hospital.

CW2 Crist and three other infantrymen lifted the wounded Soldier into the Apache’s front seat. CW2 Crist strapped him in.

“He was bandaged up, and blood was all over him,” CW2 Crist recalled.

CW2 Crist then went to the left side of the aircraft and ran a tether to the aircraft and hooked it on his air warrior vest. He sat on the small wing of the Apache and placed his feet on a narrow walkway lining the fuselage. He knocked on the window to let CW4 Purtee know that he was in position and ready for the flight.

CW4 Purtee said that he felt more nervous than CW2 Crist did during the flight.

“I had my co-pilot strapped to the side of the aircraft and a critically wounded Soldier in the front seat, and we were leaving a very dangerous area,” CW4 Purtee said. “It wasn’t a long flight, but it felt like it took forever.”

CW2 Crist said flying outside the aircraft was similar to “sitting in the back of a truck going down the highway.”

The flight to Camp Ar Ramadi lasted just a few minutes. They reached the medical pad, and CW2 Crist stayed with the wounded Soldier while medical personnel waited for the ambulance to move him to the hospital.

“I eventually had to get a guy at the pad to talk to him,” CW2 Crist recounted. “I knew we were going to go back out (to the battle in Ramadi), and I wanted to keep my head right.”

Once the wounded Soldier had been safely removed from the aircraft, the pilots climbed back in and flew back to the battle.

The next day, the crew found out that the Soldier had been moved to the hospital at LSA Anaconda, and they decided to visit him. His jaw had been wired shut, but medical staff gave him a pad to write on.

“Thank you,” he wrote. “Sorry for messing up your helicopter.”

The pilots learned the Soldier wanted to be a helicopter pilot and was planning to take the aviator test in a couple of weeks.

“We did a little recruiting to get him to join the Texas Army National Guard,” CW4 Purtee said. They gave him a Company B flight patch and took some photos.

Having a wounded Soldier in the cockpit while the co-pilot rides on the outside of the aircraft is unorthodox, but CW4 Purtee said he would rather do that than watch another Soldier on the ground die.

“We have seen the tragedy of watching Soldiers on the ground waiting for Medevac,” CW4 Purtee said. “There is no more hopeless feeling than watching the guys who need help not get it, and I’m tired of that, and that’s why we made our choice to go in and do what we did.”

The pilots said they didn’t see themselves as heroes. They said the real hero in this story was the Soldier who was shot while engaging the enemy. **GX**

CPT RANDALL STILLINGER

INDIANA

Soldiers from the 38th Division Support Command arrived home July 14, after completing missions overseas.

MINNESOTA

More than 400 Soldiers departed on July 13 to support the Kosovo International Security Force and be

responsible for NATO peacekeeping operations in Kosovo for one year. The Soldiers are from the 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry.

MISSOURI

SGT Lindsey Green recently earned three awards in the Warrior Leader Course. SGT Green made the Comman-

dant’s List, earned the Distinguished Honor Graduate Award and won the Physical Training Award for having the highest scores in her class.

MONTANA

On July 30, 126 additional Soldiers were activated to extend their effort in the fight against wild land fires

throughout the state. The Guard had already been supporting the wild land fire effort with helicopters and crews for two weeks.

NEVADA

About 110 Soldiers from the 1/221st Cavalry arrived home July 21, after a one-year deployment to Iraq.

FRIENDS TAKE CANCER AWARENESS TO NEW LEVEL

RUN FOR LIFE Brendan Murphy (left) and Nolan Taylor train with their three-wheeled strollers in preparation for their 2008 429-mile trek across South Dakota, designed to raise awareness of cancer and help others affected by it.



Courtesy of the South Dakota National Guard

RAPID CITY, SD—Chemo is harder!

That's the motto of two motivated friends who are champions in the fight against cancer.

South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier Brendan Murphy and friend Nolan Taylor will be running 429 miles across the state of South Dakota in 14 days next year in an effort to raise awareness of cancer and help those affected by it.

"There are some tremendously brave men and women fighting this battle and they shouldn't have to do it alone," said Murphy about the Chemo is Harder Cancer Research Run.

Both Murphy and Taylor are aware of the sacrifice made by family and friends in this fight, as Murphy recently lost his father to the disease and his mother is a cancer survivor. Taylor's father was diagnosed with cancer last year, which led to surgery, radiation and chemotherapy.

"Many of us have no idea of just how difficult it really is," said Murphy.

Taylor and Murphy hope to raise money and awareness by promoting a positive outlook through running and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Murphy, an operations officer in Rapid City, said the team expects to begin their journey on April 26, 2008, at Capitol, MT, and finish on May 12 at Big Stone, MN. They hope to average 31 miles a day.

They plan on complete self-support during the run by pushing their supplies and equipment in strollers. The gear will include clothing, shelter, cooking equipment, food, water, first aid kits and communication devices.

No matter how difficult the journey may be, they said, "chemo is still harder."

The two have teamed up with the American Cancer Society. All money raised will go directly to cancer research efforts. **GX**

Those interested in finding out more about the Chemo is Harder Cancer Research Run and how it started, see the route, or how to make a financial contribution, visit:

ChemolsHarder.com

VICTORY MAP >>>



TEXAS

By July, the TXARNG had recruited 3,478 Soldiers for the year, surpassing three months early the year-end goal of 3,300 new recruits set by NGB. Recruiters expect the total of Soldiers to exceed 18,900 by the end of the year.

VIRGINIA

On July 22, 104 Soldiers from the 237th Engineer Company participated in a federal Mobilization and Departure Ceremony recognizing their service in support of OIF. The unit entered active duty on July 19.

It was announced on Aug. 1 that BG Grant L. Hayden would assume command of the VAARNG's 29th Infantry Division from MG Arthur H. Wyman.

TNARNG MILITARY POLICE APPRECIATE SUPPORT

By CPT Darrin Haas

Sleepily, I loaded one of three buses rumbling outside the armory to take us to the airport. It was deathly quiet and bitter cold at 2 a.m. in early January as Soldiers finished loading their gear and prepared to leave. Outside the armory there was a small gathering of family members saying goodbye for the last time. One Soldier's mother held a cardboard sign that read, "You are our Heroes." We pulled out of the armory with no crowds, no flashing lights and no police escort. Family members did not trail behind us. We crept through town, down the highway and to the airport, where a lone security guard waited to lead us to the tarmac. We quietly slipped out in the middle of the night.

That was January 2003, and we were headed to Kuwait and on to Iraq for the buildup to what is now Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I expected something similar when I departed with the 130th Military Police Company from Memphis on July 15, 2007, for Camp Atterbury, IN.

First, we were not mobilizing for Iraq or Afghanistan, but for Kosovo. Most of my friends could not find Kosovo on a map and didn't know U.S. troops were even there. Usually, they just look at me with a turned-up nose and a contorted face and say, "Oh, I thought you were going someplace dangerous." Second, we are a small group of fewer than 60, a small blip on the screen with companies, battalions and brigades having been mobilizing at a constant rate since 2003.

But it was strikingly different this Sunday morning. Family members lined the streets with numerous signs, banners and teary goodbyes. The unit was presented a handmade 8-foot flag from children of a local preschool. And, most surprising to the Soldiers of the unit, more than 40 dedicated men and women of "Rolling Thunder" and the "Patriot Guard"

arrived to wish the unit good luck and escort us out of Memphis.

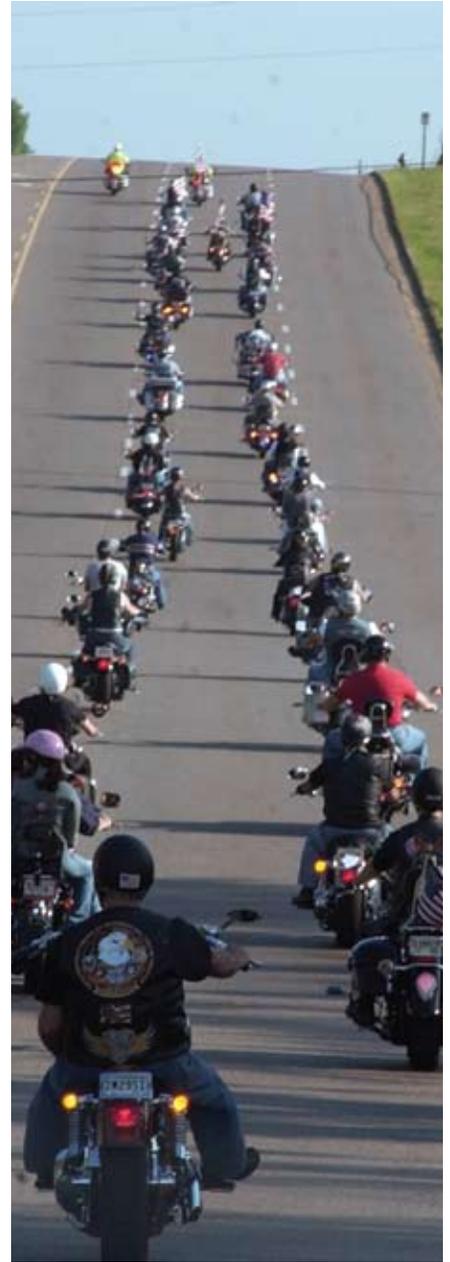
When the band of patriotic volunteers arrived at 6 a.m. Sunday morning, they spread throughout the unit to thank all the Soldiers for our service; most of them are Veterans themselves. Once the Soldiers boarded the bus after hugging their families goodbye, Rolling Thunder and the Patriot Guard took the lead.

The first two riders of the 40-member group pulled out of the armory trailing full-size American Flags. The rest of the group pulled behind, two-by-two with military precision, adorned with American Flags and patriotic signs. The convoy of motorcycles and buses pulled past the crowds of cheering families and onto the road. Local police as well as trained members of the volunteer group blocked traffic as Rolling Thunder led the unit down streets past the Memphis Airport and out onto the highway.

But the escort did not stop there. These patriots escorted us over 200 miles from Memphis to Nashville, where we were handed off to another chapter of Rolling Thunder, which escorted us north to the Kentucky border. When each member pulled off they cheered, saluted and continued their thanks.

Overall, we were escorted more than 300 miles by men and women we have never met and may never get a chance to thank. Every member of the unit was amazed and thankful at the dedication of these groups. One Soldier, PFC David Parrish, said, "I can't believe that these guys would go through all this trouble for us." On the ride to Atterbury, many Soldiers talked about and were amazed to hear the numerous other roles Rolling Thunder and the Patriot Guard play supporting troops deploying and returning home.

The support showed the 130th MP Co. was in sharp contrast to my previous deployment, and it humbled me to know that the Guard



EASY RIDERS Members of Rolling Thunder escort TNARNG Soldiers departing for their mobilization station.

is getting this kind of support. It reaffirmed my commitment to my country knowing such patriotic men and women were going through extensive lengths to support the troops, and show us that they care about what we are doing. Thank you. **GX**

CPT DARRIN HAAS



IRAQ



33 00 N, 44 00 E (Middle East)
Capital: Baghdad
Population: 27,499,638

Comedians Dave Attell and Scott Kennedy visited the 466th Area Support Medical Company, New York Army National Guard and entertained the troops. They talked to patients there, signed autographs and took pictures.

Attell and Kennedy visited units, guard towers, participated in a controlled detonation of surplus ammunition and toured one of the world's oldest buildings, the historic Ziggurat.

BIG RIG Driver Lowell Wilderman with the Ride of Pride VI truck.



SCHNEIDER ADDS RIDE OF PRIDE

Story and photos courtesy of Schneider National

GREEN BAY, WI—Schneider National Inc., a premier provider of transportation, logistics and intermodal services, has found a unique way to support military Veterans, POWs and MIA Soldiers. Schneider added the patriotically painted Ride of Pride VI truck to its nationwide fleet. Lowell Wilderman, a retired Navy Veteran who has driven for Schneider for 17 years, will captain the special vehicle.

On May 27, the Ride of Pride VI participated in the Ride for Freedom, an annual event during which nearly a million motorcyclists ride through Washington, DC, to promote POW-MIA issues.

The Ride of Pride VI is a Freightliner Cascadia™ truck, a new truck model launched in May by Freightliner. Since 2001, employees at Freightliner’s Cleveland, NC, plant have volunteered to design a Ride of Pride truck every year. This year’s design features images of a bald eagle, an American Flag, a POW-MIA logo and military campaign ribbons from WWI to the Global War on Terror.

“We had a large number of drivers request the Ride of Pride truck, so we selected one person from a pool of drivers with military service,” said Darel Schoening, regional maintenance director and project lead for the Ride of Pride VI vehicle. “The task of selecting a driver was especially difficult because over 35 percent of Schneider’s 15,500 drivers are military Veterans—a statistic we are extremely proud of.”

Wilderman is thrilled head up the Ride of Pride VI. “This is an experience of a lifetime,” he said. “I am honored to get in the driver’s seat and show our troops how much we care.”

ABOUT SCHNEIDER NATIONAL INC.

Serving more than two-thirds of the FORTUNE 500 companies, Schneider National offers the broadest portfolio of services in the industry. The company’s transportation and logistics solutions include One-Way, Intermodal, Transportation Management, Dedicated and Bulk. With wholly owned subsidiaries Schneider Logistics, American Port Services and American Overseas Air Freight, Schneider National is the only truckload carrier to offer customers end-to-end domestic and international logistics solutions. **GX**

For more information about Schneider National, call **(800) 558-6767** or visit:

Schneider.com

VICTORY MAP >>>



AFGHANISTAN



33 00 N, 65 00 E (Southern Asia)
Capital: Kabul
Population: 31,899,923

Taliban and al-Qaida insurgents manufacturing IEDs in the caves and compounds of the Alishang Valley are being hunted by infantrymen of the 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, an Arizona National Guard unit.

The 1-158th, has been conducting regular patrols, combined with Afghan

security forces, as part of a greater effort to push farther into northern Laghman province where insurgents have been known to roam freely.

The battalion also provides security forces for Provincial Reconstruction Teams across Afghanistan.



THE REASONS FOR A STRONG NATIONAL GUARD ARE GETTING MORE POWERFUL.

You don't know when, or even if, a natural disaster will strike your community. But you can be sure of the National Guard. In cities, towns and in rural communities, the Guard is trained, equipped and ready to serve whenever nature delivers a devastating punch.

A strong, successful Guard is built on dedication and courage. Have you got it? If you think so, visit us online or call us. Be one of the people your community can rely on at the worst of times. Become a Citizen-Soldier.



YOU CAN

Learn more about the Guard. Visit
www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
JOIN THE NATIONAL GUARD
The National Guard offers college and career training
benefits. Go online to find out more.

EAGLE BASE TURNOVER SYMBOLIZES SUCCESS IN THE BALKANS

By SSG Jim Greenhill, NGB

TUZLA, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA—The American flag flew over Eagle Base for the last time on the morning of June 30, the day the U.S. turned this sprawling military installation over to its host nation.

LTG H Steven Blum, chief of NGB, was the senior military representative at the ceremony. He commanded the Guard's 29th ID at Eagle Base in 2001–2002 during a 12-year U.S. military presence.

“When U.S. military forces arrived, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a shattered country, reeling from years of devastating warfare,” he told the audience, including two of the country's three presidents and other officials.

“Bosnia and Herzegovina is today a sovereign, democratic nation, fully at peace, cooperating with its neighbors and committed to joining the Euro-Atlantic community,” LTG Blum continued.

From 1992 to 1995, this nation was engulfed in war. After the Dayton, OH, Peace Accords of 1995, a NATO-led international peacekeeping force (IFOR) placed 60,000 troops into the country. IFOR was succeeded by SFOR, the Stabilization Force. SFOR gave way to EUFOR, European Union peacekeeping troops whose mission is only now winding down.

“The American military presence here, initially totaling 20,000 U.S. Soldiers, signified a vital U.S. commitment to the success of the Dayton peace process and to helping Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path to peaceful reconstruction and development,” LTG Blum said, speaking in English and Serbo-Croatian. “Eagle Base was a critical facility for the successful implementation of the military provisions of the Dayton Accords in northeast Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

LTG Blum spoke for more than 100,000 active and reserve U.S. service members, including many Guard members, who have served at the base since 1995.

“This is a very special day for us,” said U.S. Ambassador Douglas L. McElhane, who accepted the flag from MG Richard Wightman Jr., the senior military representative to NATO headquarters, after it was lowered and replaced with Bosnia and Herzegovina's flag.



SUCCESS Service members fold the flag after it was lowered for the last time during a ceremony marking the formal turnover of Eagle Base June 30.

“A lot of money, a lot of people have been through here,” McElhane said, reflecting the magnitude of the U.S. commitment to peace. “When the flag comes down, it's always sad to see, but when a Bosnian flag representing all the Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks in this country goes up, it's a very nice thing to see because we know that we were part of it.”

The nation's three ethnic groups once fought. Now they share a political process and increasing prosperity. The conflict, symbolized by the heartbreaking devastation of the capital, Sarajevo, that only a few years earlier had hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics, once commanded newspaper front pages and led newscasts. The peace receives little publicity.

“No news is good news,” McElhane said. “That's a pretty good indication that things are going well. We have some ups and downs in terms of trying to develop institutions, in terms of trying to bring folks together. But there are a lot of people of good will in this country, and I want to think that one thing that the United States, the military and everyone else leaves here is that willingness to compromise and to do things as a team, to do them together. That's part of our legacy here.”

Bosnia and Herzegovina now contributes troops to Operation Iraqi Freedom and aspires to NATO membership.

“This is a great success story,” LTG Blum said. “The fact that U.S. forces and NATO forces

no longer need this base to maintain stability in this region is a huge sign of success.”

Partners at Eagle Base included U.S., Nordic, Polish, Turkish and Russian brigades.

It was in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, from a spot now marked by a stone block set in a wall along a bustling street, that high school student Gavrilo Princip assassinated the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Historians consider that single event in the Balkans the trigger for WWI, which brought death to millions across the continent.

The Guard's links with Bosnia and Herzegovina continue through the State Partnership Program (SPP). The nation is just one example of the continuing security relationship between the U.S. and Bosnia and Herzegovina, LTG Blum said.

President Nebojsa Radmanovic, one of the nation's three presidents, called the handover of Eagle Base a significant, hopeful moment marked by his nation's thanks and symbolizing trust.

“The transformation of the defense ministry and integration of the Armed Forces has become a model for the reform of other ministries and the government as a whole,” LTG Blum said. “The Armed Forces are strengthening their capacity for crisis management, response to natural disasters and peace support.” **GX**

JOSH TURNER RELEASES LIVE ALBUM

By SSG Heather Allen

Patriotism is something Josh Turner knows well. This past Memorial Day, he sang the national anthem and "America the Beautiful" on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

Last year, when his song "Would You Go with Me" was released, he performed it for President Bush and members of Congress.

Since releasing "Live at the Ryman" in July, Turner has received rave reviews for the album.

Turner's performance in Nashville, TN, couples his amazing voice with a few jokes in between. It promises to entertain.

The album contains 13 songs, including legendary hits such as George Jones' "He Stopped Loving Her Today" and Hank Williams' "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive."

On the album, Josh performs one of Merle Haggard's most recognizable songs, "Silver Wings." "Every time we start that song off, everybody knows what we're about to play,"

says Josh. "It's very recognizable and it's one of those classic Merle Haggard songs."

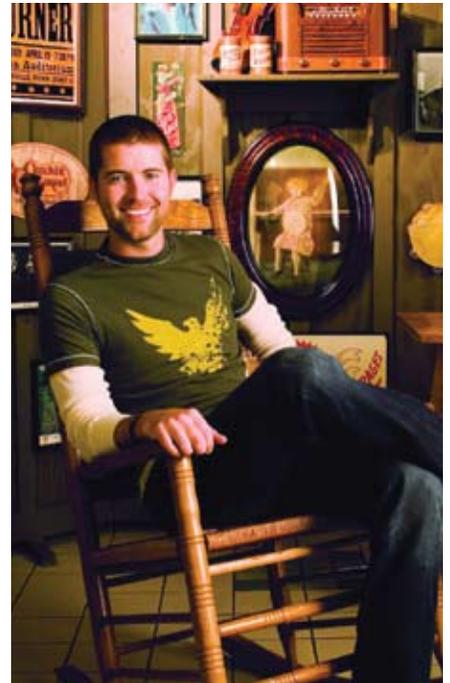
Turner also has original songs on the album, including "Backwoods Boy," a tune he wrote after graduating from college. "I basically just sat down and was trying to write a song about my growing up, spending a lot of time . . . hunting and fishing and just being outdoors," says Josh. "I wrote quite a few songs there and that was one of them." **GX**

Josh Turner: "Live at the Ryman" is Turner's third CD and is available only in Cracker Barrel stores or online at:

CrackerBarrel.com



ROCKIN'
Josh Turner kicks back at Cracker Barrel.



CALIFORNIA GUARD SOLDIERS SUPPLY AID TO ORPHANAGE

By PFC Melissa Escobar

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN—Backpacks jammed full with school supplies, soccer balls, teddy bears, toys, hygiene kits, sandals and shoes were delivered to an Afghan orphanage in the Mahmud Raqi District by members of the Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) on June 27.

National Guard Soldiers with the 351st Civil Affairs Command from Mountain View, CA, along with the 1175th MP CO, 205th MP Battalion, from Mississippi, geared up and armed themselves with humanitarian supplies.

In the three months that the team has been in country, this was the first time it visited the orphanage.

“The governor of the province asked us to visit the orphanage,” explained CPT Jordan J. Berry, team leader with 351st CACOM. “The mission was a goodwill gesture to strengthen ties with the community.”

“It’s a positive thing,” said MAJ Jim E. Blashford, a native of Grass Valley, CA, with 351st CACOM. “It shows our ability to make a high impact by giving to those who could really use this stuff and shows that we’re not the bad guys. These kids have none of this stuff and it’s an obvious example of the United States doing good and being put in a good light.”

While giving the children humanitarian aid supplies was the main event, the team took the opportunity to observe the orphanage’s facilities and asked the director if there was a need for anything else.

The director of the orphanage and the on-staff doctor, who runs the small health clinic inside, expressed the need for certain medicines and supplies for the children. Another concern the director had was the quality of water coming from the nearby well.

“Finding out about their additional needs, such as the medicine shortages and who is funding them, is good for us to know,” said CPT Berry.

During the visit, the team also learned the facilities being used by the orphanage are being rented and only temporary.

“I would like to see a permanent building built for the kids,” said SGT Valentin DeLeon,



a civil affairs specialist with the Bagram PRT, who spent the day handing children backpacks and pumping up soccer balls. “I hope we can influence the governor to take more interest in improving the orphanage.”

The Bagram PRT routinely meets with the Kapisa governor to discuss changes they feel necessary to improve the quality of life for the people of Afghanistan.

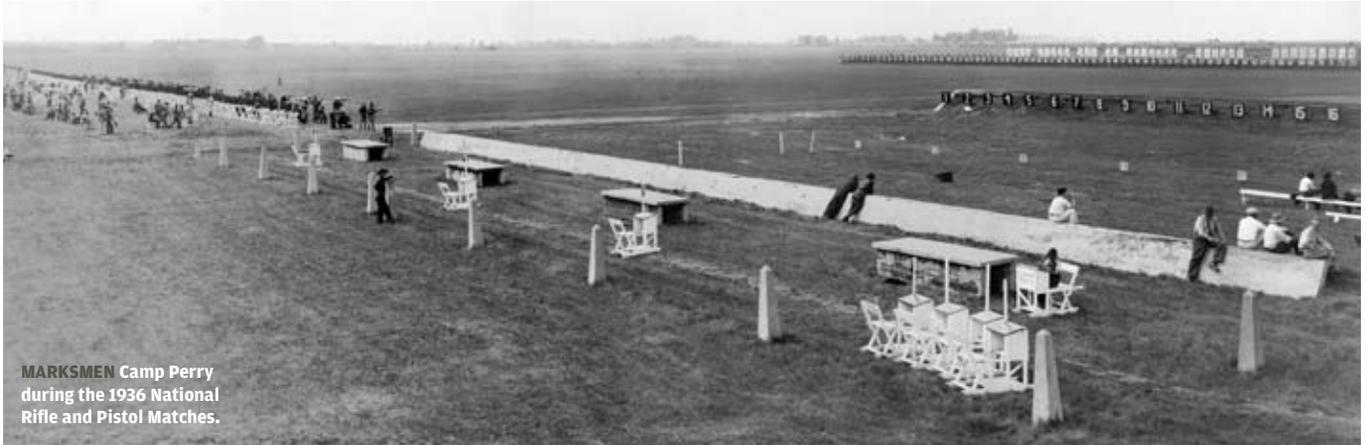
“It was a perfect opportunity to give to those who have an obvious need,” said MAJ Blashford. “We have plenty to give away. This

HELPING HAND SGT DeLeon opens up a soccer pump to inflate a soccer ball for a child at the Kapisa Orphanage in the Mahmud Raqi District of Afghanistan during a humanitarian aid drop.

was really just a way for us to get our foot in the door.”

“Every day we see improvements in Afghanistan,” said SGT DeLeon. He hopes to watch the development of the orphanage. “I like doing my job and it’s awesome to see your projects grow and progress. It’s a good feeling.” **GX**

CAMP PERRY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF SERVICE TO MARKSMANSHIP



MARKSMEN Camp Perry during the 1936 National Rifle and Pistol Matches.

By James A. Sims II

CAMP PERRY, OH—When Ohio Army National Guard (OHARNG) CPL L.B. Jarrett fired the “first shot” early in the morning of August 19, 1907, at the newly built Camp Perry Training Site, BG Ammon B. Critchfield, Ohio adjutant general, and others in attendance had no idea the sound from his .30 to .40 caliber Krag-Jorgensen rifle would echo for years to come.

BG Critchfield, often referred to as the “Father of Camp Perry,” selected the site while duck hunting in the marshes along Lake Erie in 1905. A year later, the Ohio Legislature appropriated \$25,000 to purchase more than 300 acres of land for the state rifle range and camp. By 1907, the 200-, 600- and 800-yard ranges were ready, with more than 160 targets. What BG Critchfield didn’t know is that he had built an ideal range where marksmen would gather for national matches for the next 100 years.

Since then, the nation’s finest civilian, law enforcement and military marksmen have squared off each summer for five weeks of rifle and handgun competition in a variety of formats and events. This July, more than 6,000 shooters took part in a historic milestone—the 100th anniversary of National Matches at Camp Perry.

The event is an economic boon to the local area, contributing more than \$10 million annually. The matches also have a larger economic impact of \$15 million to \$20 million to the northwest corridor of Ohio.

The National Matches encompass both the National Rifle and Pistol Championships, conducted by the National Rifle Association, and the National Trophy Matches, conducted by the Civilian Marksmanship Program .

A look at historical photographs from the early years reveals interesting details about the historical roots of the Ohio National Guard (OH NG). “The training site has some rich history,” said SSG Josh Mann, full-time historian for the OH NG and caretaker of weapons, uniforms and other historical artifacts from the era. “During WWI, Camp Perry served as a training center for officers and marksmanship instructors, and during WWII, it housed German and Italian POWs.”

Today, many of Camp Perry’s original structures are still in use for other functions.

During the centennial celebration, visitors see re-enactments of events representing various wars throughout the years, and the on-post museum includes displays focusing on eras of military history.

“I can tell you without a doubt this camp is rich in history and now stands as a world-class facility with the largest outdoor rifle range in the world,” said COL James Chisman, Camp Perry Training Site commander since 2005.

The National Rifle and Pistol Matches are considered America’s “World Series of the Shooting Sports” and attract thousands of competitors from across the nation.

“The partnership between the Guard, the CMP and the NRA is, at its core, what makes this annual event the premier experience that it is,” COL Chisman said.

The CMP was created by Congress to provide civilians an opportunity to learn and practice marksmanship skills in case they were called to serve in the military. Over time, the emphasis of the program shifted.

“We promote firearms safety training and rifle practice for all shooters,” said Gary Anderson, director of the CMP. “However, our primary focus is to develop and sustain successful youth shooting programs at both the regional and national level.”

In addition, the CMP is responsible for the annual First Shot ceremony. The event serves as the kickoff for the annual competitions. This year’s ceremony took place on Camp Perry’s Rodriguez Range. John McLaurin III, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for human resources, was the guest of honor, and fired the competition’s first shot with a specially selected AR-15 competition service rifle.

“Camp Perry may well be the single most-revered place in the hearts and minds of competitive shooters,” said NRA President John Sigler. “Since 1907, some of the most elite marksmen America has ever produced have competed there.”

The NRA’s competitive shooting division offers a wide range of activities for novices to world-class competitors, and sponsors more than 10,000 shooting tournaments each year.

The Camp Perry Training Site also provides facilities for state and federal law enforcement agencies and offers lodging, conference and banquet facilities to the general public. **GX**

LOCAL SOLDIERS TURN FIREFIGHTERS



COURAGEOUS
(left to right) SFC
Dustin Green and
MSG Don Lilleman.

By Michelle Key

LEXINGTON, MO—MSG Don Lilleman and SFC Dustin Green, of the Missouri Army National Guard (MOARNG) armory in Lexington, were called to duty when a neighbor's garage caught fire.

At 5 p.m. on Tuesday, MSG Lilleman and SFC Green stepped outside the armory for a break.

"We were preparing for annual training," explained MSG Lilleman. "We were staying late to get caught up."

The Soldiers heard a commotion next door, saw a woman running and heard yelling. Soon MSG Lilleman saw smoke.

SFC Green ran inside the armory to get fire extinguishers. The Soldiers ran around the gate surrounding the armory and arrived at the home. There was a box on fire and a pan full of a mixture of gasoline and motor oil.

MSG Lilleman, a volunteer with the Higginsville Fire and Rescue team, put his experience to use.

"As soon as I realized that it was an oil fire, I knew that our chemical extinguishers

would put it out. I kicked the pan over into the driveway and put out the fire," explained MSG Lilleman.

Meanwhile, the neighbor's foot was on fire. Green managed to extinguish the flame and save the man.

The Soldiers soon found that the neighbor had been working on his classic car in the garage when a work light fell into the mixture pan and broke. This caused the mixture to burst into flames. The Soldiers were unharmed, but the neighbor has second-degree burns on his leg and foot.

Shortly after, the police and fire departments arrived on the scene; however, MSG Lilleman and SFC Green had already put out the fire. After the Soldiers were free to go, MSG Lilleman and SFC Green went back to work.

"After all the commotion, we went back to War on Terror," commented MSG Lilleman. "We were just at the right place at the right time."

MSG Lilleman and SFC Green didn't give fighting the fire a second thought. They are trained to be public servants.

"Being a member of the National Guard, you are always geared [toward] public service," explained MSG Lilleman. "I am always expecting to serve." **GX**

HOTLINE GIVES WOUNDED SOLDIERS, FAMILIES A VOICE

By Christian Anderson

The Army created its new Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline so Soldiers and their families can report on their treatment while at Army hospitals.

Army hospitals and the treatment of wounded Soldiers have been under recent media scrutiny, and the hotline system was put in place to address issues that have been raised. Army officials felt there needed to be a way for wounded Soldiers and their families to provide feedback to the Army about their care, whether positive or negative.

The Army has acknowledged that Soldiers and their families are "enduring hardships in navigating through our medical care system," but it remains committed to providing excellent care for the Soldiers who have been wounded or injured.

The Washington Post published several articles in February about shortcomings at Army hospitals, and the Army has since been criticized about its treatment of wounded Soldiers. The Army has made great efforts to improve the condition of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and its treatment of Soldiers.

The Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline not only offers wounded Soldiers and their families a way to share concerns about the Army's healthcare system, but also will provide senior leaders with visibility concerning medical-related issues. The clearer the problems with the healthcare system are, the easier it will be for the Army to improve the treatment and rehabilitation of Soldiers.

The Army stresses that the hotline is to give Soldiers and their families a way to resolve medical-related issues, not to circumvent the chain of command. Soldiers will be

CALL TO DUTY
BOOTS ON THE GROUND

WOUNDED SOLDIER AND FAMILY HOTLINE

1-800-984-8523
overseas DSN 312-328-0002
stateside DSN 328-0002
email: wfsupport@conus.army.mil

The purpose of the hotline is two-fold:

- To offer wounded, injured, or ill Soldiers and their family members a way to share concerns on the quality of patient care.
- To provide senior Army leaders with visibility on medically-related issues so they can properly allocate resources to better serve Soldiers and families.

The hotline is an avenue to gather information about medical care as well as suggest ways we can improve our medical support systems.

The hotline has not been established to circumvent the chain of command, but rather to give Soldiers and family members an additional means to resolve medical-related issues. Any type of retribution directed towards those who use the hotline will not be tolerated.

CALL TO DUTY
BOOTS ON THE GROUND

not be punished for any negative feedback they provide. **GX**

The Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline can be reached from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. EST Monday through Friday at:

(800) 984-8523

GUARD ADJUSTS PRESENCE AT BORDER

By Gerry J. Gilmore, AFPS

WASHINGTON—The National Guard is adjusting the number of personnel performing security duty along the U.S.-Mexican border from about 6,000 to about 3,000 members, a National Guard Bureau (NGB) spokesman said.

Last year, President Bush directed the National Guard to assist the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency in patrolling the 2,000-mile-long border with Mexico, NGB spokesman MAJ David Kolarik told American Forces Press Service during a phone interview from the bureau's headquarters in Arlington, VA.

National Guard members "have performed superbly" in answering the President's call to assist on the border during "Operation Jump Start," MAJ Kolarik said. The Customs and Border Protection Agency is a component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Almost 6,000 Guard members—mostly volunteers—have been on border security duty in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California in support of the U.S. Border Patrol since June 2006, MAJ Kolarik said, noting the reduction was part of original planning.

"It was never meant to be a permanent solution," MAJ Kolarik said of the National Guard's participation in Operation Jump Start. "It was just an intermediate measure to provide support for border security efforts until they brought the additional resources and personnel in line that they needed."

The Guard redeployment is slated for completion around September 1, he said.

About 3,000 National Guard members will continue assisting the Customs and Border Protection Agency along the border, MAJ Kolarik said. The National Guard's presence there has helped bolster border-protection efforts to curtail illegal immigration and circumvent narcotics traffic, MAJ Kolarik said.

The Guard's duties on border patrol include conducting surveillance, operating detection equipment, working with border entry identification teams, analyzing information, assisting with communications and giving administrative support to Border Patrol.

National Guard members "have done just a phenomenal job down there on the border," MAJ Kolarik said. **GX**

STANDING GUARD An Army National Guard Soldier from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, 29th Brigade Combat Team stands watch on a ridge above Nogales, AZ, at the Mexican border.



SGT JIM GREENHILL



COUNTRY MUSIC GREATS GATHER TO SUPPORT TENNESSEE SOLDIER

By Christian Anderson

NASHVILLE, TN—The South is noted for its hospitality, and this caring spirit was evident on July 17, when more than 5,000 people gathered at a star-studded concert to raise money to build a home for a hometown hero.

When it was all over, more than \$100,000 had been raised for this hero, a Soldier and remarkable survivor named SGT Kevin Downs, who had been seriously wounded on duty in Iraq.

Three Soldiers died; he almost did.

SGT Kevin Downs, of the Tennessee Army National Guard (TNARNG), was a regular “Joe.” SGT Downs grew up in the Nashville suburb of Kingston Springs and spent his time doing things normal teenagers do. He played football and graduated from Harpeth High School.

After high school, SGT Downs joined the Guard, and in 2004 was deployed to Iraq with the 278th Regimental Combat Team.

On Sunday, August 13, 2005, his life changed dramatically. His Humvee was hit

by an IED, which threw him from the turret into a nearby ditch. The blast fatally injured the other three Soldiers in the vehicle: SGT Shannon Taylor, SGT Gary Lee Reese and SSG Asbury Hawn.

The blast devastated SGT Downs. It broke many of his bones, and he suffered second- and third-degree burns over 60 percent of his body. Both legs had to be amputated.

SGT Downs was not expected to survive the Medevac flight to the nearest hospital. But he persevered and hung on for his life. He was then transported to Germany, and once again it was speculated he would not last long. SGT Downs fought hard, eventually making it to Brooke Army Medical center in San Antonio, a state-of-the-art medical hospital that focuses on the recovery process for wounded Soldiers.

Upon his arrival at Brooke, doctors considered his outlook grim. But he refused to give up. With the support of the staff at Brooke, father Joe and mother Catherine, SGT Downs made a steady recovery. He has spent the past two years amazing people with his enormous will.

As word about SGT Downs spread around the Nashville area, people felt an urgency to help him. His story inspired people from all walks of life, and many felt it was their duty to help him make the transition back to civilian life. Eventually, plans for a benefit concert began, with a goal of raising enough money to build a handicap-accessible house for the Soldier. Thus, the concert’s name: Home For A Hero.

THE STARS COME OUT

Some of country music’s biggest stars took the stage, including Lonestar, Collin Raye, Joe Diffie and Charlie Daniels.

Daniels, one of Nashville’s longest-running country music stars, is a fierce supporter of America’s Soldiers. He’s been to Iraq several times to visit and perform for the troops. His commitment to them has earned him the respect and admiration of thousands of fans, because he likes to bring a “little bit of home” to them in Iraq.

“I can’t tell you how grateful I am for the Soldiers,” Daniels said in an interview with

GX's SSG Heather Allen. "We are fighting for the very life of America. Kevin is a true hero and he needs our help. We need to . . . give him all the support we can."

Lonestar, which formed in 1993 and hit the big time on the country scene with hits including "I'm Already There" and "Amazed," also supports the troops and wanted to help SGT Downs. "We just want to let the Soldiers know we are thinking about them," said Lonestar guitarist and vocalist Michael Britt.

A military "Heavy Metal Show," courtesy of the TNARNG, preceded the concert at 5 p.m. Military police Humvees, artillery pieces, a Bradley fighting vehicle and an Apache attack helicopter were on display.

Soldiers from various units answered questions and explained weapons systems' capabilities. A 50-foot rock-climbing wall was a huge success with the kids.



HERO SGT Kevin Downs meets just a few of the 5,000 people who gathered for the Home for a Hero concert, which helped raise money for SGT Downs.

Around 6 p.m., the sound of countless motorcycles grew as local Rolling Thunder and Patriot Guard riders escorted SGT Downs from his home in Kingston Springs to the event.

At 7 p.m., Charlie Daniels took the stage and rocked Greer Stadium with the "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." When Daniels spoke a few words about SGT Downs, the audience enthusiasm was contagious.

After several other bands and musicians played their sets, a representative from the Rolling Thunder took the stage to announce

that an anonymous person had donated \$25,000 to the Home For A Hero fund, which brought wild applause.

SGT Downs took the stage and thanked everyone for their support and kindness. A post-concert fireworks show topped off the night.

A STRANGER NO MORE

The \$100,000-plus raised by Home For A Hero will be used to build SGT Downs a log home in Cheatham County, TN.

Most of the people attending the concert didn't know SGT Downs personally. They'd seen his story on the news, they knew him through a friend or they just heard about the concert. But those who came together on this night might just feel a little closer to a hero who served his country and protected their freedom. **GX**



For more information on SGT Downs or to make a donation, visit Home For a Hero online:

HomeForAHero.com

WISCONSIN SOLDIER DECORATED FOR VALOR



By SGT David Lankford

CAMP TAJI, IRAQ—SGT Timothy Hansen, a gun truck commander with the 1157th Transportation Company, 867th Corps Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade (SB), was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for Valor during an Aug. 1st ceremony on Camp Taji.

In May of this year, SGT Hansen's squad, acting as convoy security for a combat logistic patrol, rushed to assist another convoy's vehicle after it struck an IED. Shortly into the mission, SGT Hansen's gun truck found itself in the same tragic circumstance as the crew they set out to relieve.

"We got struck by a large IED that was in the median in the road. The blast was big enough that some of the main parts of it actually hit just behind us and pretty much bent the truck in half," said the Janesville, WI, Soldier.

SGT Ryan Fellenz, SGT Hansen's driver, sustained serious injuries from the blast. In

addition to ripping out the vehicle's steering box, the powerful explosion rolled the burning vehicle over, onto its gun turret. The gunner, SPC Joseph Steen, trained for such an accident, ducked back into the truck prior to the rollover.

"He bounced around in the vehicle pretty good and sustained a severe shoulder injury," SGT Hansen said.

The gun truck commander following SGT Hansen's vehicle responded immediately. He jumped to assist the injured Soldiers managing to pry the passenger door open and pull SGT Hansen from the vehicle.

SGT Hansen, though barely conscious, circled his destroyed vehicle to extract the injured SGT Fellenz. Despite his own injuries, he immediately began administering first aid. SGT Hansen credited his recent combat lifesaver recertification, as well as the training of the Soldiers who came to his aid, with saving his buddy's life.

"The CLS training made all the difference in the world. I was still pretty out of it because

DECORATED SOLDIER COL Aundre Piggee, commander of the 15th SB, awards SGT Timothy Hansen the Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal for Valor and the Combat Action Badge.

of the concussion," said SGT Hansen. "I did what I could. I kept SGT Fellenz calm and helped put the tourniquet on."

Realizing the severity of his comrade's injuries, SGT Hansen chose to stay behind with the convoy until medical personnel evacuated SGT Fellenz and SPC Steen. He later returned to Taji for treatment of his own injuries.

In addition to his award for valor, COL Aundre Piggee, commander of the 15th SB, also awarded SGT Hansen the Purple Heart and Combat Action Badge.

"It is an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to present [these awards] to a Soldier of the 15th Sustainment Brigade," said COL Piggee. "This Soldier is the epitome of the Warrior Ethos; he came to the rescue of a fellow Soldier who was critically wounded. He is a true American hero." **GX**

MO SOLDIERS AND VOLUNTEERS PREPARE CARE PACKAGES

Story and photos by Gary Stevens

ST. LOUIS, MO—A diverse group of volunteers recently came together to spend a Saturday assembling care packages for Soldiers in Iraq.

More than 100 volunteers came from the Missouri National Guard's Family Readiness Group (FRG) of Detachment 5 of the 735th Force Provider Company, the St. Louis County Police Triads - 4th Precinct, the Florissant Military Explorers, the South County Boy Scouts, Army Reserve Psychological Operations Soldiers, the Ohio Military Reserve - Missouri Detachment, and Missouri National Guard Soldiers.

Operation Homefront donated backpacks and products for the Soldiers. Employees of the St. Clair, IL County Board helped put products in the backpacks before the packs were sent to Jefferson Barracks for additional goods for the troops.

Scottrade helped out the 735th's Family Readiness Group by paying for the cost of the postage to ship the care packages overseas. Scottrade donated \$1,400 to pay for the

postage to ship the care packages to Iraq.

"This went even better than I imagined," said Paul Fields, of the 735th's Family Readiness Group. "Without Scottrade and the volunteers from the community, we couldn't have gotten this done."

"It went really well. I was totally amazed at the turnout of more than 100 volunteers," said Nancy Amundson, of Fenton. She has a son, Ben, in the 1035th Maintenance Company who is on the deployment with the 735th.

"This is a testament to how the community feels about what the Soldiers are doing for us." Sending care packages to the troops "is the least we can do. It was a lot of work, but it was fun. We're just looking forward to everyone coming home," said Amundson.

Linda Ferguson volunteered to help box up the care packages. Her son, Shannon, is a member of Detachment 3 of the 735th. "It's good to see people are aware of the Soldiers and that people were willing to take up a Saturday to do this. It makes us feel attached and like we're part of what the troops are doing."

Scottrade not only provided the money for

postage to ship the care packages, four employees came out to help assemble the packages.

"We wanted to do a community service project," said Jeremi Kahmke, manager of the Scottrade Des Peres branch. "We wanted to step up and do something to show support to the troops."

Joel Renner of Scottrade said, "We feel like it was a good use of Scottrade marketing dollars to help out the Soldiers and our country."

"This is fantastic," said Laura Harriman, a volunteer with the St. Louis County Police Triads - 4th Precinct, about the day readying care packages for the Soldiers. "There is a great need for service people and their families to get what they need. However we can back them up, we will."

The FRG is a volunteer organization of Soldiers and civilian employees, whether single or married and family members belonging to the unit. The FRG provides an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communication among family members, the chain of command, and community resources. **GX**

PROUD VOLUNTEERS Jeremi Kahmke, Scottrade's Des Peres branch manager, presents a check for postage to Paul Fields, coordinator of the Family Readiness Group of Detachment 5 of the 735th Force Provider Company.

Pictured (left to right) Kent Peek, Joel Renner, Jeremi Kahmke, Paul Fields, SGT Joel Fields, Jahon Fakrazad.





SERVICIO HONORABLE



Hispanic Heritage in the Guard



HONORABLE SERVICE



STANDING TALL SPC Richard Olmedo and SGG Jorge Garica stand in front of Arlington Hall in Virginia, where they represented the California Guard during the 2007 NCO and Soldier of the Year Competition.

“Through hard work, faith in God, and a deep love of family, Hispanic-Americans have pursued their dreams and contributed to the strength and vitality of our nation. They have enriched the American experience and excelled in business, law, politics, education, community service, the arts, science and many other fields. Hispanic entrepreneurs are also helping build a better, more hopeful future for all by creating jobs across our country. The number of Hispanic-owned businesses is growing at three times the national rate and increasing numbers of Hispanic-Americans own their own homes. We continue to benefit from a rich Hispanic culture and we are a stronger country because of the talent and creativity of the many Hispanic-Americans who have shaped our society.

Throughout our history, Hispanic-Americans have also shown their devotion to our country in their military service. Citizens of Hispanic descent have fought in every war since our founding and have taken their rightful place as heroes in our Nation's history. Today, Americans of Hispanic descent are serving in our Armed Forces with courage and honor, and their efforts are helping make America more secure and bringing freedom to people around the world.”

President George W. Bush
 September 14th, 2006
 Proclamation of National Hispanic Heritage Month

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed National Hispanic Heritage Week. In 1988, the observance was expanded to a month-long celebration. During this month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

September 15 was chosen as the beginning of the celebration because it's "independence day" for five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Additionally, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively.

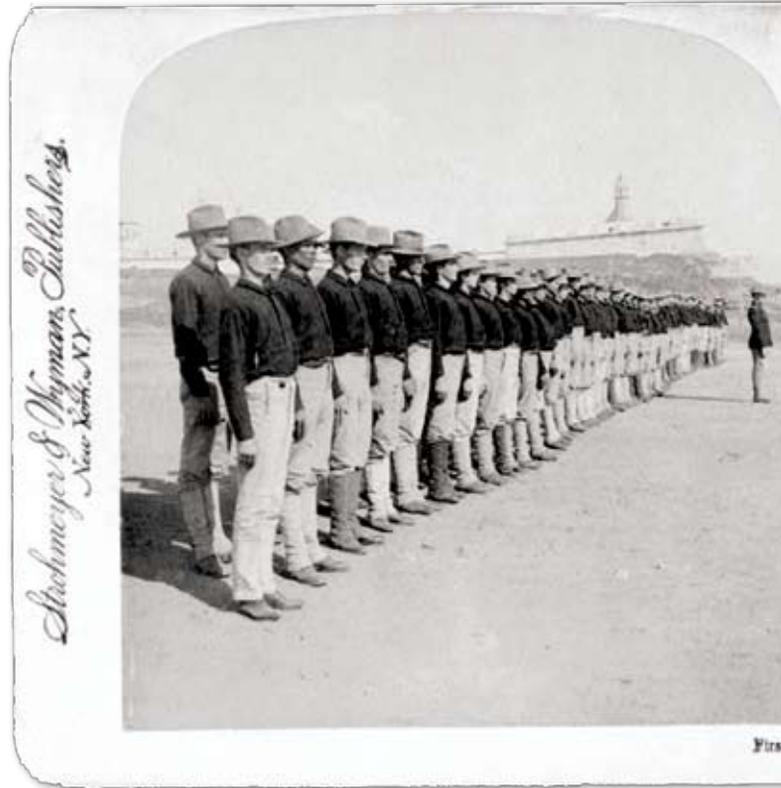
In order to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month, GX is exploring the contributions and sacrifices made by Hispanic-Americans who've taken up arms in defense of this land. This proud history predates the formation of the U.S. by hundreds of years, with the muster of the St. Augustine militia unit in 1565. Since then, Hispanics have fought with honor and distinction on the front lines of every major conflict.

You'll meet Hispanic-Americans who've earned some of this country's highest military distinctions, as well as Soldiers currently serving in the Guard. From general to specialist, they all proudly celebrate their Hispanic heritage. Each of them comes from a different background, but all share two things in common: They're all of Hispanic descent, and they're all American Soldiers.

Hispanic-Americans have a remarkable record of military service. Whether their heritage is traced to Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico or one of dozens of other Spanish-speaking countries or cultures, they answered the call to duty, defending America with unwavering valor and honor.

Pre-Revolutionary War

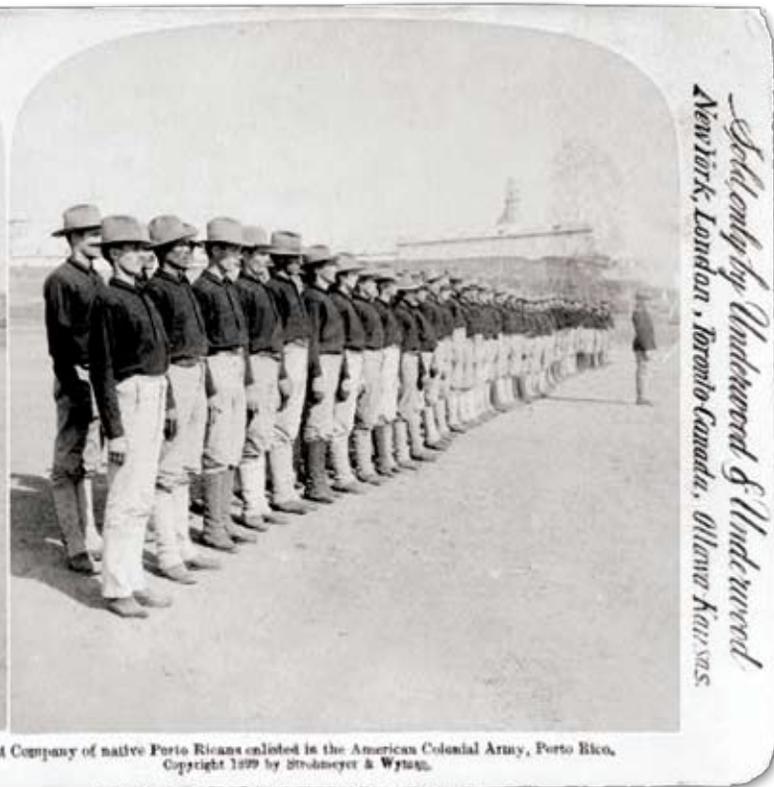
The Hispanic-American history of service predates the formation of the republic by more than 200 years. In fact, Hispanic-Americans formed the very first unit of Citizen-Soldiers in 1565, on what would later become U.S. soil. At that time, the Spanish colony of St. Augustine in Florida raised a militia to defend itself against attacks by native tribes.



➤ **Then...**
The first unit of native Puerto Ricans to enlist in the colonial American Army stands to attention in this stereoscopic image made in 1899. Puerto Ricans have served proudly in the U.S. Military distinguishing themselves time and again



COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



And Now...

Soldiers of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard 1-295th pose with BG Roque Nido and CSM Alberto Santiago in Talil, Iraq, April 2006. These troops were responsible for providing security to civilian convoys traveling throughout Iraq. A unique bi-lingual force, this unit conducted most of it's communications in Spanish but easily switched to fluent English whenever it was needed.



CHRIS WEST



The barracks used by these troops still stands today in St. Augustine and serves as headquarters for the Florida Army National Guard.

Although the Guard began in 1636, the Soldiers of Florida's National Guard proudly point to those Spanish militiamen as the original Citizen-Soldiers.

Revolutionary War

While many Americans are aware of French support for the U.S. during the Revolutionary War, few realize that Spain was a crucial U.S. ally and that Hispanic-Americans fought the British alongside other American patriots.

Troops from Spain, Mexico and the Caribbean region, along with Hispanic-Americans, were instrumental in defeating British forces along the Gulf of Mexico, from Pensacola and Baton Rouge to Natchez and Mobile, securing the fledgling republic's southern flank.

During the last major battle, at Yorktown, VA, French and American forces were able to sustain their triumphal efforts and pay for salaries, provisions and ammunition, thanks in large measure to financial donations by Hispanic women in Havana, Cuba.

War of 1812

In the War of 1812, Hispanics played a major role in securing victory for the U.S. in nearly every battle. In the most famous battle—GEN Andrew Jackson's defense of New Orleans—Hispanics from Louisiana and surrounding areas helped stave off a massive British invasion and led the United States to victory, in what some call "America's second war of independence."

Texas Independence and the Mexican War

Thousands of Hispanics sided with the Texans and later with the Americans during the war for Texas independence and the subsequent Mexican War. At the Alamo, perhaps the most famous battle of the war, a number of Hispanics fought alongside Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie, defending the Alamo to the death against the numerically superior army of Mexico's Gen. Santa Anna.

Civil War

Like other ethnic groups of Americans, Hispanics were divided in their loyalties during the Civil War, fighting heroically for both the Union and Confederate armies. Most Hispanics were integrated into Regular Army or volunteer units, although some served in predominantly Hispanic units with their own officers. Hispanics were especially instrumental in protecting the southwest against Confederate forces.

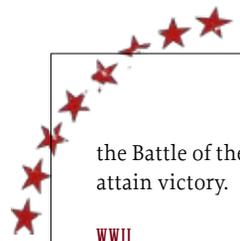
Spanish-American War

Several thousand Hispanic volunteers, mostly from the southwestern U.S., fought with honor in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War. CPT Maximiliano Luna and other Hispanic-Americans served with the famous 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, better known as the "Rough Riders," as they fought their way across Cuba. George Armijo, another Rough Rider, later became a member of Congress. Also, a large number of Cuban and Puerto Rican troops fought for the liberation of their homelands alongside U.S. Soldiers.

WWI

Some 200,000 Hispanics were mobilized for WWI. Many served with great distinction, including Nicholas Lucero, who was awarded France's medal for bravery in combat, the Croix de Guerre. He single-handedly destroyed two German machine gun nests and engaged the enemy for three hours.

Marcelino Serna received the Distinguished Service Cross for capturing 24 enemy soldiers. From the battle of Chateau-Thierry to



the Battle of the Marne, Hispanic Soldiers helped the U.S. and its allies attain victory.

WWII

About half a million Hispanics served during WWII. GEN Douglas MacArthur called Arizona National Guard's 158th Infantry Regiment ("Bushmasters") "... one of the greatest fighting combat teams ever deployed for battle." The regiment was heavily comprised of Hispanic Soldiers.

The Texas National Guard's 141st Infantry Regiment, in which many Hispanic Soldiers served, fought in France and Italy for one year and suffered thousands of casualties. The entire list of mostly-Hispanic units cited for valor in WWII would be several pages long. And countless Hispanic Soldiers served in other integrated units that fought bravely, earning numerous medals for valor and bringing victory to the U.S. and its allies in both the European and Pacific theaters.

Korean War

Many units, comprised mostly of Hispanics, served with distinction during the Korean War. One example is the 65th Infantry Regiment, which fought in every major campaign of the war. Altogether, approximately 150,000 Hispanics served in the war, many earning awards for valor, from Bronze Star Medals to Medals of Honor. Among the notables is GEN Richard E. Cavazos, who served with the 65th Infantry Regiment in Korea and later, in Vietnam, became the Army's first Hispanic four-star general.

Vietnam War

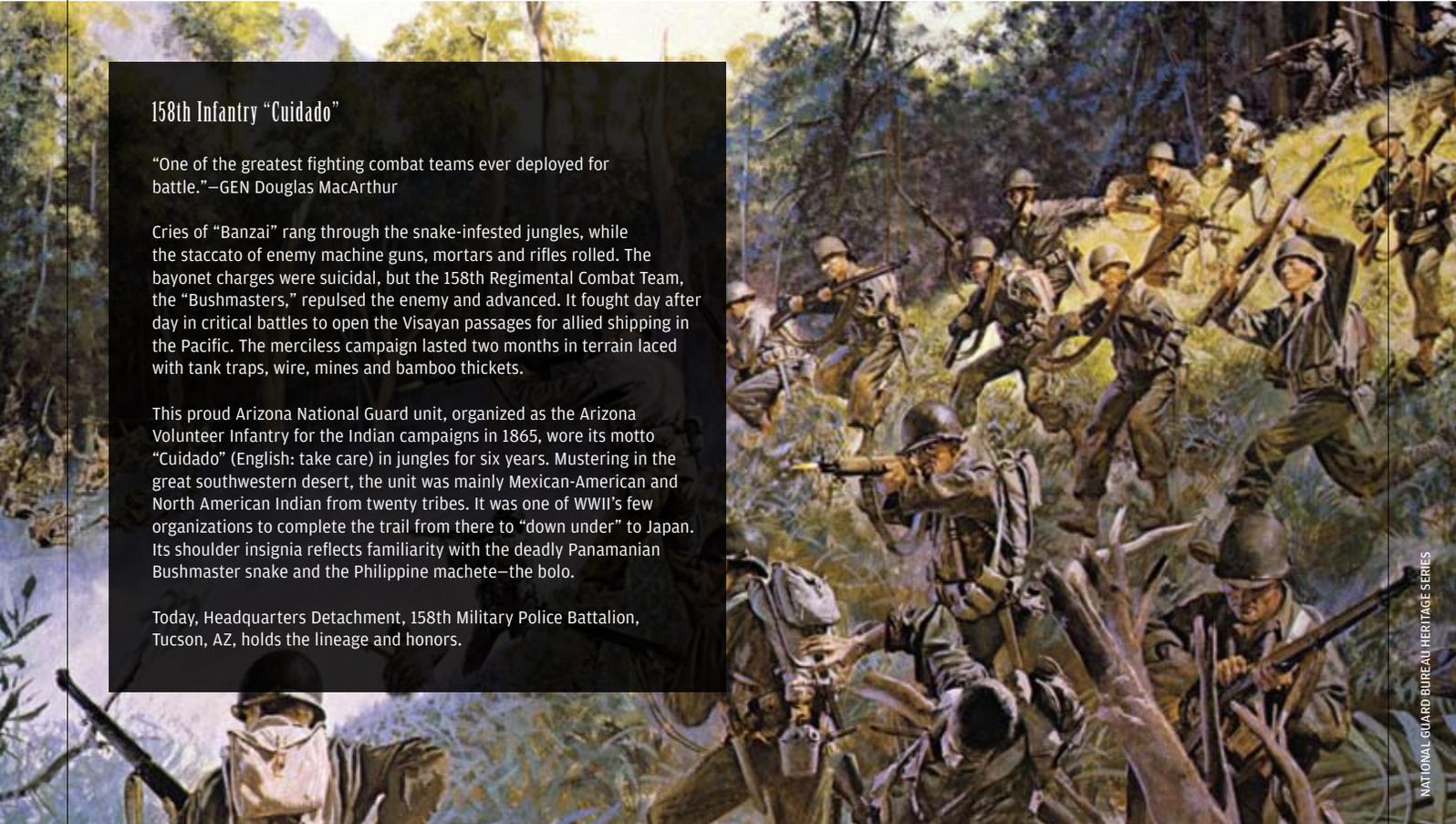
Approximately 80,000 Hispanics served with distinction in Vietnam, from the Battle for Hue City to the Siege of Khe Sanh.



In addition to their exemplary wartime contributions in Vietnam, and later in operations in Panama, Grenada, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, Hispanic men and women also served with distinction in the Army during peacetime. One Hispanic Soldier who achieved considerable success was Louis Caldera, who graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1978. He subsequently served in the Army and became secretary of the Army in 1998.

Global War on Terror

Today, thousands of Hispanic-American warriors are fighting in the Global War on Terror, engaging the enemy on distant shores, as well as protecting the homeland in the most noble of endeavors. Today, just as in generations past, Hispanic Soldiers—both men and women—can be especially proud of their significant contributions to the war effort and in responding to the call to duty. >>>



158th Infantry "Cuidado"

"One of the greatest fighting combat teams ever deployed for battle."—GEN Douglas MacArthur

Cries of "Banzai" rang through the snake-infested jungles, while the staccato of enemy machine guns, mortars and rifles rolled. The bayonet charges were suicidal, but the 158th Regimental Combat Team, the "Bushmasters," repulsed the enemy and advanced. It fought day after day in critical battles to open the Visayan passages for allied shipping in the Pacific. The merciless campaign lasted two months in terrain laced with tank traps, wire, mines and bamboo thickets.

This proud Arizona National Guard unit, organized as the Arizona Volunteer Infantry for the Indian campaigns in 1865, wore its motto "Cuidado" (English: take care) in jungles for six years. Mustering in the great southwestern desert, the unit was mainly Mexican-American and North American Indian from twenty tribes. It was one of WWII's few organizations to complete the trail from there to "down under" to Japan. Its shoulder insignia reflects familiarity with the deadly Panamanian Bushmaster snake and the Philippine machete—the bolo.

Today, Headquarters Detachment, 158th Military Police Battalion, Tucson, AZ, holds the lineage and honors.

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU HERITAGE SERIES



BG Kenny Montoya

Hometown: Taos County, NM

Length of Service: 24 years

Major Deployments: Desert Storm, multiple deployments worldwide.

Heritage: Family has lived in New Mexico for more than 350 years.

BG Kenny C. Montoya became adjutant general (AG) for the New Mexico National Guard, Santa Fe, NM, on April 26, 2003.

His Hispanic heritage has always been a symbol of pride, honor and loyalty, inspiring him to achieve great things in the military. His family, which has

lived in Taos County, New Mexico, for more than 350 years, has a long tradition of service and protection of the citizens of New Mexico and the U.S. It's this tradition, in large part, that provides him with the drive to excel.

BG Montoya has accomplished much during his tenure as AG, but one of his proudest achievements is being the first American to train with the Mexican military and be awarded a set of Mexican Jump Wings.

2LT Victoria D. Depaulis

Hometown: Rye, NY

Length of Service: USMC—four years, Army National Guard—five years

Major Deployments: Okinawa, Japan, Samesan, Thailand

Heritage: Second-generation naturalized citizen, born in Barranquilla, Colombia

2LT Depaulis is a naturalized citizen who decided to make a career out of serving her new home. That career seems to be moving along quite nicely. She is currently in charge of the National Guard Security detail at JFK Airport in New York City. She has a cousin who served in the Marines during Desert Storm, but she is quick to point out that while she may be the second member of her family to serve, she is the first woman and the first officer.



SSG Mark Araujo

Hometown: Omaha, NE

Length of Service: 16.5 years

Major Deployments: OEF, 2005

Heritage: Third-generation Mexican-American

SSG Araujo hails from a family that places a high value on both their Hispanic heritage and service to their country. His father (pictured below right) served in the 96th Division in the South Pacific during WWII, where he was wounded on Okinawa Island. Coincidentally, the day SSG Araujo was mobilized for active duty in April 2005 was also the 60th anniversary of his father's assault on Okinawa. SSG Araujo has many other relatives that saw action in Korea and Vietnam.

When asked why he chose to serve he said: "I joined because of adventure in the early years, but now I have grown to value public service and I believe there is no higher calling than to defend the Constitution of this great republic from all enemies, foreign and domestic. I do love my country."



CSM Richard G. Vasquez

Hometown: San Antonio, TX

Length of Service: U.S. Army—19 years, Army National Guard—16 years

Major Deployments: Vietnam, Noble Eagle, Iraq, Central America, South America, Japan, Australia

Heritage: Mexican descent; family has been in the U.S. as far back as anyone can remember.

CSM Richard G. Vasquez tells his own story better than we ever could.

"I am very proud of my Mexican heritage and I will always identify with [it], never forgetting where I came from, who I am and how deep my roots are embedded in that heritage.

"Two years ago... I was selected and appointed to the position. . . of state command sergeant major, an appointment unprecedented in the history of the state. I am also the first Hispanic-American of Mexican heritage appointed to the position in the history of . . . Texas, dating back to 1836.

"... I never quit and this just proves my point. Through all the disappointments and challenges that I endured... I never lost my dignity or my self-respect. I would not be who I am today if I had. Not bad for a former migrant worker . . . and a . . . high school dropout who supported himself since the age of eleven."





PFC Silvestre S. Herrera

Medal of Honor

Near Mertzwiller, France, March 15, 1945

PFC Herrera advanced with a platoon along a wooded road until stopped by heavy enemy machine gun fire. As the rest of the unit took cover, he made a one-man frontal assault on a strongpoint and captured eight enemy soldiers.

When the platoon resumed its advance and was subjected to fire from a second emplacement beyond an extensive minefield, PFC Herrera again moved forward, disregarding the danger of exploding mines, to attack the position.

He stepped on a mine and both feet were severed, but despite intense pain and unchecked loss of blood, he pinned down the enemy with accurate rifle fire while a friendly squad captured the enemy gun by skirting the minefield and rushing in from the flank.

The magnificent courage, extraordinary heroism and willing self-sacrifice displayed by PFC Herrera resulted in the capture of two enemy strongpoints and the taking of eight prisoners.

“I am a Mexican-American and we have a tradition. We’re supposed to be men, not sissies.”
—PFC Silvestre S. Herrera

LTG Edward Baca

First Hispanic-American Chief of the National Guard Bureau

In 1977, after more than 20 years of service, LTG Edward Baca was appointed adjutant general, New Mexico National Guard. He led the New Mexico guard to a position of national prominence as a vital component of the “total force.” He also spearheaded a nationwide National Guard force modernization effort and directed the first fielding of the Chaparral and Hawk missile battalions in the Reserve.

The NGB designated New Mexico’s award-winning drug-demand-reduction program as a pilot for all states. In 1994, LTG Baca was promoted to lieutenant general and assigned as chief, National

Guard Bureau, a position he held until retirement in 1998.

“In the military, particularly in times of war, everybody has the same color—you become brothers,” LTG Baca said. “The military has done a tremendous amount to foster integration, equal opportunity, and mutual respect and love between the races and people of different backgrounds. Having ethnic observances like Hispanic Heritage Month helps educate people about Hispanics, African-Americans and other ethnic and racial groups’ contributions to the nation. But I look forward to the day when ethnic observances are not necessary—the day when it won’t make any difference.”—LTG Edward Baca



65th Infantry Regiment “The Bourinqueneers”

When war broke out on the Korean Peninsula in 1950, Puerto Rico’s 65th Infantry Regiment (the “Borinqueneers”) was ready for combat. The Soldiers landed at the southern tip of South Korea in the port of Pusan, where the final pocket of U.S. and South Korean resistance faced an overwhelming number of enemy forces. The 65th subsequently took a key role in driving the invaders back and preventing an enemy victory.

The 65th distinguished itself during the Korean War, with its Soldiers winning four Distinguished Service Crosses and 125 Silver Star Medals, along with other numerous medals, exemplifying service and sacrifice. The 65th Infantry Regiment’s gallant service in a difficult war is exemplified by its regimental motto, “Honor and Fidelity,” and the regiment itself exemplifies the National Guard’s leading role in our nation’s military history.





By the Numbers

The Cultural Influence of Hispanic-Americans

Why are Hispanic-Americans such a powerful cultural force in the U.S.? Just take a look at the numbers and it'll all make sense.

★ An estimated 44.3 million Americans of Hispanic heritage lived in the U.S. as of July 2006. This makes people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic minority. Hispanics constituted 15 percent of the nation's total population. (This census estimate did not include the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico.)

★ 102.6 million
The projected Hispanic population of the U.S. as of July 1, 2050. According to this projection, Hispanics will constitute 24 percent of the nation's total population by that date.

★ Of Hispanic-American households, 64 percent are of Mexican descent. Another 9 percent of Puerto Rican descent, with 3.5 percent Cuban, 3 percent Salvadoran and 2.7 percent Dominican.

★ 1.6 million
The number of Hispanic-owned businesses in 2002.

★ \$222 billion
Revenue generated by Hispanic-owned businesses in 2002, up 19 percent from 1997.

★ 9.9 million
The number of Hispanic family households in the U.S. in 2006. Of these households, 62 percent included children younger than 18.

★ 32.2 million
The number of U.S. household residents age 5 and older who speak Spanish at home. Among those who speak Spanish at home, more than half say they speak English very well.

★ 7.6 million
The number of Hispanic citizens who reported voting in the 2004 presidential election.

★ 1.1 million
The number of Hispanic Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sources: U.S. Census Department, 2007 / 2005 American Community Survey



These are just a few representatives of the great many Hispanic-American Soldiers who serve our country. They exemplify the outstanding traditions of service, honor and loyalty demonstrated by so many Hispanic Soldiers in the Guard today.

Despite our different countries of origin, despite the many lands where our ancestors once lived, we and our families, along with these great Soldiers, have all decided to be a part of something truly unique—the American dream. The dream that no matter who we are or how humble our beginnings, through hard work and dedication we can make a better life for ourselves and our children.

American Soldiers have been called time and again to defend this dream against tyranny, oppression and naked aggression. In every instance, Americans of Hispanic decent have been on the front lines, fighting with distinction and honor. **GX**

Sources: Department of Defense, U.S. Army, U.S. Census Department

STANDING WATCH SSG Clemente of the CAARNG stands watch on the border between San Diego and Tijuana. He is one of approximately 6,000 Guard Soldiers deployed to the border as part of Operation Jump Start.



PHOTO CREDIT

THE BUGLER



**A STRENGTH MAINTENANCE FEATURE:
BECAUSE EVERY SOLDIER IS RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE STRENGTH OF THE GUARD**



MAXPREPS >>>

The Army National Guard has partnered with MaxPreps, the most widely used resource for high school sports info. Together, they will increase awareness of the Guard in high schools nationwide. It's particularly useful in states and communities where recruiters have difficulty accessing schools. Program elements will include online banner advertisements, events, and location media. For more info, visit www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com.



STAY GUARD RECRUIT SURVEY

Designed to help recruiters support new recruits from day one, the Recruit Survey is given to recruits nearing completion of their third week of Basic Combat Training (BCT). With questions on topics such as recruits' physical and mental readiness, their recruiter, and administrative preparation, the survey gauges recruits' experiences prior to and during BCT or One Station Unit Training. The findings will be used to refine Recruit Sustainment Programs and other recruitment and training programs.



FALL 2007 CAMPUS CAMPAIGN <<<

This program targets four-year college students and supports Basic Combat Training needs, and officer and non-prior service recruitment. On-campus hands-on events (including multiple physical activities designed to engage and challenge students) will create awareness and generate leads by employing a full range of event marketing coupled with a media campaign, via online and direct media.



GED PLUS RESIDENCY RECRUITMENT PROGRAM <<<

The GED Plus Residency Program is a recruitment initiative that develops a pipeline of candidates for GED Plus. It identifies individuals who have expressed interest in obtaining their GED and continuing their education.

PATH TO HONOR AND THE GUARD EXPERIENCE

Path to Honor transforms the way we assess Soldiers into the Guard, cutting the contact-to-contract period in half. The Guard Experience is an enhancement activity encouraging young recruits to learn about the ARNG in a classroom setting. www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com



SMTC

STRENGTH MAINTENANCE TRAINING CENTER

RECRUITING, RETENTION AND ATTRITION MANAGEMENT

VISION: To be recognized as the leader in providing critical training resources required to achieve end strength.

MISSION: Develop and deliver quality, relevant training that positively impacts the end strength of the Army National Guard.

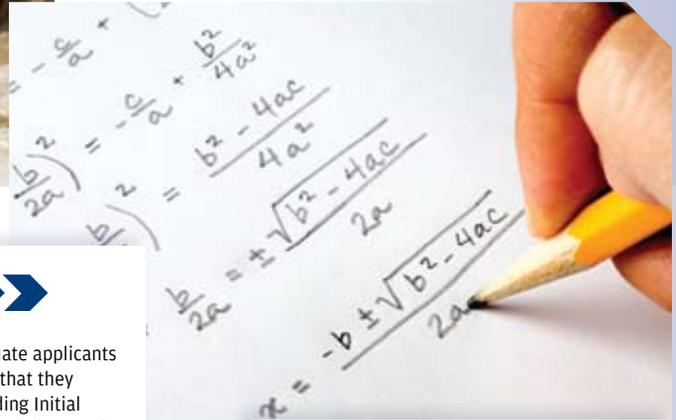


RSP MASTER CADRE COURSE DEVELOPMENT ▶▶

National Guard Bureau's Strength Maintenance Division - Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) Branch and the Strength Maintenance Training Center (SMTC) are sponsoring a Critical Task Site Selection Board to identify tasks that are inherent to the operation of a successful RSP. These tasks will be used to develop an accredited RSP "Master Cadre Course" that will become a resident course at the SMTC to prepare officers/non-commissioned officers for RSP leadership and cadre duties. Graduates of this course can be awarded a Special Skill Identifier, which denotes them as force multipliers within their state's efforts to reduce Training Pipeline Losses and improve personnel readiness and Military Occupational Specialty qualification rate.

OFFICER RETENTION

The Officer Retention Section is currently designing an Officer Career Guide (OCG) to assist newly commissioned officers in understanding their career path. OCG will also enable leaders with the attrition management and attrition techniques and guidelines for achieving a successful Officer Strength Maintenance Program.



GED PLUS ▶▶

Allows non-high school-graduate applicants to enlist, with the stipulation that they earn their GED prior to attending Initial Entry Training. This course maximizes each Soldier's ability to successfully complete their GED.

HEART

The Harnessing Exceptional Achievements Through Recruiting Testimonials (HEART) Initiative improves RRNCO competency by efficiently incorporating a Soldier's identified lessons learned, tactics, techniques, procedures and other comments.



CMF 79T "CTSSB" ◀◀

The SMTC recently hosted a critical task site selection board (CTSSB) for MOS 79T skill levels 4-5. The CTSSB is a key element of the Army's Systems Approach to Training process. It is a management device that serves as a quality control function when determining what are critical tasks and where these tasks will be trained (site selection).

79T CONVERSION COURSE

This course enables RRNCOs holding SQ14 to obtain the MOS 79T. This is available to NCOs who've completed at least one year as an RRNCO since completing the ARNG Recruiting and Retention NCO course.



MOBILE TRAINING TEAM (MTT) ASSISTANCE ▶▶

The MTT offers exportable training to impact the strength of the ARNG. The program addresses strength maintenance issues for drilling units and the RRC. Each event is tailored to each state's needs, while re-emphasizing the philosophy of recruiting, attrition management and retention.



THE ARNG RE-ENLISTMENT/EXTENSION BONUSES

THEY'RE BACK . . .

As of August 10, 2007, the ARNG's Re-enlistment/Extension Bonuses (RE/EBs) have been re-instated. Two RE/EBs for MOS-qualified Soldiers with fewer than 24 total years of service that re-enlist or extend their enlistment for three or six years in a Critical Skill MOS or Critical Unit (UIC).

There are exceptions for Soldiers who wish to extend and are not MOS-qualified because of unit transformation or reorganization. These Soldiers can also qualify for the RE/EB if they become qualified in their new MOS within 24 months after reorganization.

The bonus amounts and options are as follows:

1. RE/EB FOR CRITICAL UIC OR SKILL

- A Soldier who re-enlists/extends for a six-year option within a critical Unit Identification Code (UIC) or skill will receive a \$15,000 bonus, paid in a lump sum. Payment will be processed on the effective date of the new contract, even though Soldiers can extend up to 12 months before their Expiration Term of Service (ETS).
- A Soldier who re-enlists/extends for a three-year option within a critical UIC or skill will receive a \$7,500 bonus, paid in a lump sum. Payment will be processed on the effective date of the new contract.

2. RE/EB FOR NON-CRITICAL UIC OR SKILL

- A Soldier who re-enlists/extends for a six-year option within a non-critical UIC or skill will receive a \$15,000 bonus, paid in a lump sum. This payment will be processed on the effective date of the new contract, even though Soldiers can extend up to 12 months before their ETS.
- There is no three-year option, with the exception of Soldiers on an initial three-year REB contract. These Soldiers will be able to extend for the \$6,000 bonus.

NOTE: The REB for non-critical MTOE RTI, Training Areas and MEDDAC units is only valid until September 30, 2007.

Deploying and deployed Soldiers serving in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area will receive the incentives tax-free if the extension is signed during the month the Soldier serves in these areas.

OTHER ARMY NATIONAL GUARD RETENTION PROGRAMS:



EXTEND TO DEFEND >>>

A program designed to help units improve the way they recognize Soldiers who extend enlistment. Soldiers are presented a certificate in an appropriate holder with an embedded coin. There are two versions. One for married Soldiers and another for single Soldiers. There are three levels of awards: bronze, silver and gold. The levels are based on the number of years of service the Soldier has served. Bronze is 1-9 years; Silver is 10-14 years; Gold is 15-20+ years. Battalion career counselors use the Extend to Defend Virtual Armory Web as the ordering database. After-action reviews from ARNG leadership have determined this tool vital in assisting with the Soldier recognition process. This program is managed by each state's retention manager and battalion career counselors.



SOLDIER CONNECTION KITS <<<

Designed to encourage and facilitate better communication between Soldiers and their families. This program is specifically designed to make it easy for the deployed or basic training Soldier to write their families, keeping them connected while they are away from home. Research has shown that increased communication creates better family and Soldier morale, thus improving retention. This program is managed by each state's retention manager.

THE FREEDOM SALUTE CAMPAIGN >>>

Recognizes deserving Soldiers, family members, friends, employers, centers of influence and other VIPs for their contributions to the ARNG. It also increases awareness in the community of ARNG Soldiers. Items included in the Freedom Salute Program are a United States Flag folded and displayed in an elegant display box, a certificate honoring the Soldier's service, a coin and a medallion with a display box. There is also a ring for Soldiers who've been deployed multiple times and a clock for their spouses. This program is managed by each state's retention manager and appointed battalion career counselors.



FOR MORE ABOUT NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU RETENTION PROGRAMS, CONTACT SFC DANIEL FLOYD AT (703) 601-2993.

G-RAP-O = More Cash for You

By Keith Kawasaki

Everyone knows G-RAP is a huge success. It garners thousands of new Soldiers, and thousands of dollars for the existing force hitting the streets to build the team. Well, get ready to hit it double time with the latest innovation in G-RAP (and military acronyms): G-RAP-O. G-RAP-O (Guard Recruiting Assistant Program-Officers) promises up to \$8,500 for select officer recruits.

“G-RAP-O was considered some time ago when G-RAP was first developed. However, it was important to ensure that G-RAP would be successful,” LTC John Williams, Chief, Officer Strength Maintenance Branch of the Army National Guard, tells *GX*. “Since G-RAP is so successful, the decision was made by our leadership to expand into the officer market. The Officer Strength Force does an incredible job accessing officers into the Army National Guard, but they cannot be everywhere, at all times.”

SO HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

If you’re already participating in G-RAP as an RA (Recruiting Assistant), then you pretty much know the drill. G-RAP-O is open to current RAs, traditional M-Day Officers, enlisted personnel and Army National Guard retirees. If this is all new to you, talk with a recruiter or visit GuardRecruitingAssistant.com and get signed up as an RA in your area. But, here are a few tips in the meantime.

1 NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK. Everyone you meet is a great contact that could lead to a potential recruit. For this particular version of the program, keep an eye out for officers who’ve left the service and are considering getting back in. If your PO (Potential Officer) is Basic Officer Course qualified, you’ll get an additional reward of \$1,000.

2 KNOW WHAT’S OPEN. Keep an eye on spots opening up in your unit. Some primary occupational specialties filled by Direct Commission-Basic Branch or a Specialty Branch can be rewarded through G-RAP-O. If you can score someone a Direct Commission, you get a portion of the big prize upon verified commission.

3 SEND ‘EM BACK TO SCHOOL. Encourage your fellow Soldiers to check out OCS (Officer Candidate School) and WOCS (Warrant Officer Candidate School). “This translates into increased readiness for the unit,” says LTC Williams, “helping prepare [your] unit to accomplish [your] mission.” And, you rake in rewards through each step of their processing through the schools.

AND WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

According to LTC Williams, flexibility.

“We will monitor and measure the return on investment and make appropriate adjustments,” concludes LTC Williams. “The demands of the Army National Guard are constantly changing and we may need to make adjustments to properly position our force to respond to the mission as it evolves.” ***GX***

For many, many more details, visit:

GuardRecruitingAssistant.com/officer



The Guard's Drill Sergeant Program

By Jerry Ramsey

The Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) is currently seeking highly qualified and motivated noncommissioned officers to fill their ranks as drill sergeants. The drill sergeant candidate will undergo nine weeks of rigorous training at Fort Jackson, SC, in order to assume the responsibilities associated with wearing the "Drill Sergeant Campaign Hat" or "brown round."

RSP is designed to alleviate the reasons Soldiers don't ship to basic training, commonly referred to as training pipeline losses. One example of these reasons is fear of the unknown, in that the Soldier develops apprehensions as their training date nears because they don't know what to expect. They begin to draw their own conclusions through movies, television or by embellished stories.

The old mindset of "breaking" a Soldier down in a negative or demeaning manner is no longer tolerated, as it creates resentment. This resentment can cause the Soldier to question their decision to join the Army National Guard.

The drill sergeant provides a positive role model by being a counselor, mentor and coach. The Soldiers are treated with dignity and respect. This places the RSP Soldier in a positive environment that indoctrinates the Warrior Ethos and Army Values. It allows Soldiers to trust their leadership and follow them without hesitation, and teaches them to treat one another in the same manner.

The drill sergeant doesn't lower standards or professionalism to accomplish this. They will assign tasks or missions to the Soldiers that have to be accomplished in a specific time frame. If the standards are not met, they'll face consequences, such as counseling or corrective training. It allows the Soldier to begin understanding the demands the drill sergeant will place on them at basic training, developing their Warrior mentality.

While I was a drill sergeant at Fort Jackson, I could tell which Soldiers attended RSP. It was impressive to see a Soldier who had just stepped off the bus at the reception battalion carry themselves in a military manner, addressing a drill sergeant in the correct manner.

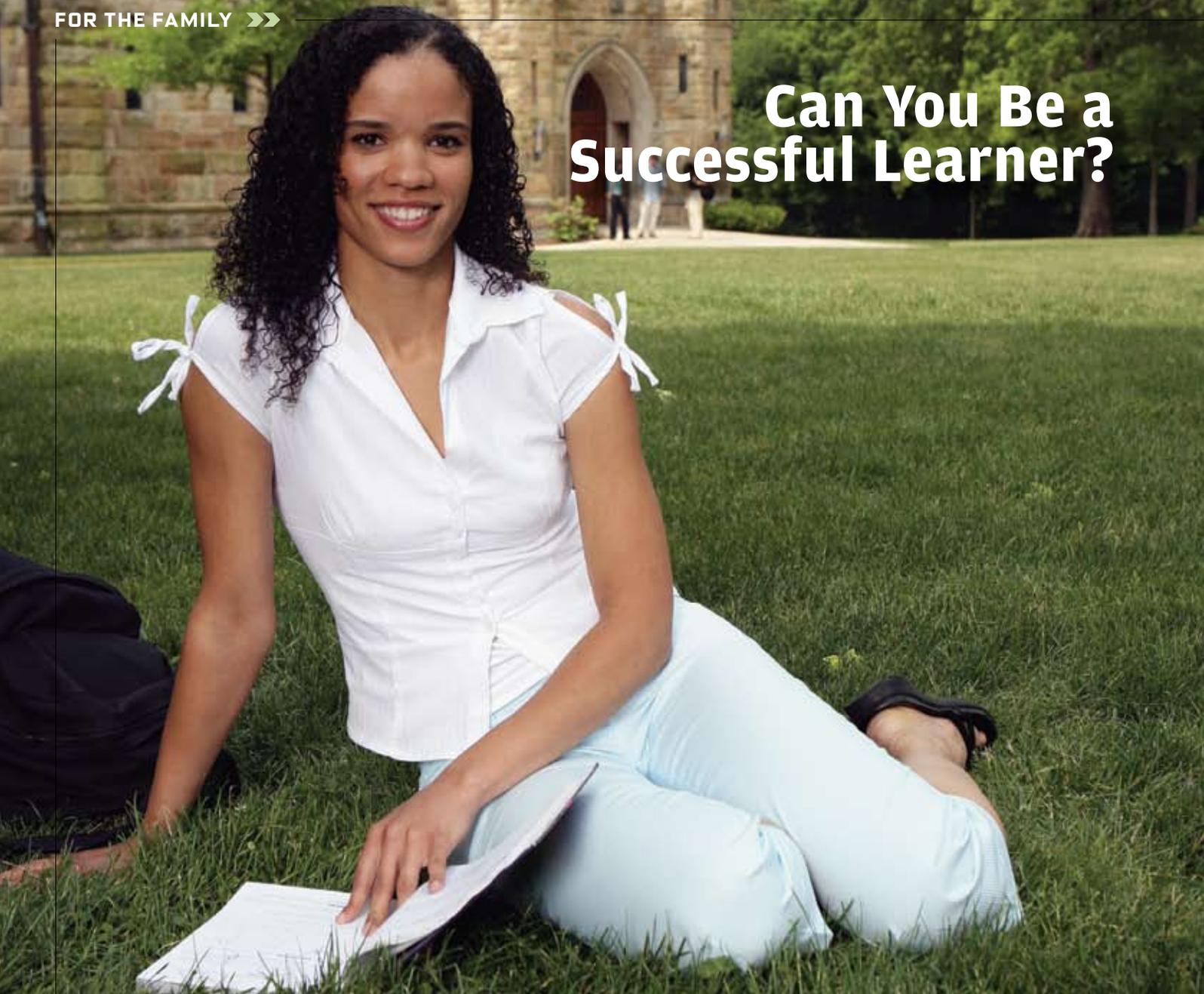
The RSP Soldier also understands the importance of teamwork and is prepared to contribute on day one. They have self-confidence and set an outstanding example for other Soldiers who didn't attend RSP. This is the reason I'd place them in leadership positions, such as platoon guide or squad leader.

Once the drill sergeant has completed the two-year RSP obligation, they'll return to their unit as a dedicated and experienced Soldier and subject matter expert in basic Soldiering and Warrior battle drills. **GX**

SWEET TALKER A drill sergeant gives recruits a "motivational" speech at a RSP drill.



Can You Be a Successful Learner?



By Johanna Altland, Grantham University

In the 21st century, more and more adults are returning to school to earn a college degree, stay current in their career field or learn new skills. Whatever your reasons for going back to school, be sure to ask yourself, “Do I have what it takes to succeed?”

What are the common qualities found in successful adult learners? They are motivated, organized, focused, positive and good communicators.

1 Motivation—It is normal for adult students to juggle work responsibilities, family commitments and a busy social calendar. How do they do it? By remaining motivated and driven to succeed. You have to stay focused and set goals for yourself. With

each goal you meet, give yourself a little reward, and you’ll be surprised at how well you stay on task.

2 Organization—You may have heard the cliché “Organization is the key.” In the case of adult students who are being pulled in 10 directions at once, it truly is. With each course you take, create a calendar of due dates and assignments so you can plan ahead and stay on task. Keep all of your class materials in one place so they are easy to find. You can use a filing cabinet or a plastic container to keep organized.

3 Focus—Whether the television is blaring or the kids are playing in the house, a successful student can resist constant distractions and remain focused on the task at hand. Filter out the disturbances that can threaten

your progress by creating a designated place to study that is away from the noise. If you can’t do that, invest in headphones or earplugs or study first thing in the morning or after the kids go to bed. You also have to be willing to say “no” to invitations when you have studying to do and deadlines to meet.

4 Positive attitude—A positive attitude can help you succeed. You should be confident in your abilities and show pride in your work. An optimistic frame of mind will help you combat stress and allow you to enjoy your classes instead of focusing on the negatives.

5 Effective communication—Whether you are sitting in a classroom or studying online, you should always be willing to share your ideas and opinions. Don’t be afraid

to speak up. Articulating your thoughts effectively through writing and speaking will impress your professors and leave them with a lasting impression that you are invested in your education.

Don't be intimidated by going back to school. Remember, you will be only as successful as you allow yourself to be. Stay positive, motivated and focused on your goal and you will succeed.

IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME— ARE YOU READY?

September is here and the back to school frenzy has begun. Below are some tips to help you and your family make the transition from those lazy summer days to the action-packed school year.

1 Shop online—For many, the thought of fighting through the crowd and standing in line for hours to buy school supplies is torturous. Luckily, you can shop online for what you need and have it delivered right to your door. Online purchasing also makes it easier to shop around and find the best deals.

2 Focus on the first day—The first day of school can be anxiety ridden for anyone regardless of their age. Make the first day of school exciting and special, something you and your kids will look forward to, by focusing on the positives like new friends and new experiences. In the morning, make a special breakfast that the entire family will enjoy together to start the day off on a positive note.

3 Develop excellent study habits—From the very first day, it is important to establish the ground rules for homework. Set aside time each night where everyone studies together. Create an environment that is distraction free by turning off the TV and the ringer on your phone. To help alleviate fatigue, take a 10-minute break each hour and do something else.

4 Establish a routine—Routines can help us manage our time and enhance our productivity. For a family, following a routine will help minimize the chaos and allow everyone to focus on important tasks like homework.

5 Eat healthy meals and exercise—Combining a healthy diet with exercise will keep your family's minds and bodies fit and free from stress. Eating right will provide the nutrients your body needs to get through the day, and exercising will cause your body to produce endorphins, a natural chemical that generates feelings of happiness.

IS LOST SLEEP CAUSING YOU TO LAG BEHIND?

There are times when you may wish there were more hours in the day to finish your work, especially projects with an approaching deadline. Since negotiating with Father Time is out of the question, many students find that cutting into hours that should be allotted for sleep is the easiest solution. Right now, you are probably performing a balancing act between your career, family and coursework, leaving you feeling as though the standard 16-hour day is just not enough time. However, before you grab another cup of coffee to pull an all-nighter, here are several reasons to think again:

1 Lack of concentration and fatigue—Depriving yourself of sleep will affect your concentration and leave you feeling tired, which will make it even more difficult to accomplish your next set of tasks the following day.

2 Impaired memory—Losing sleep by staying up all night cramming for a test may prove ineffective because of the greater chance that facts will be forgotten come test time.

3 Mental and physical health—Insufficient sleep can weaken your immune system and cause you to be more susceptible to diseases, infections and stress.

Although the amount of sleep needed varies from person to person, the average adult should receive seven to eight hours of sleep a night. This may be hard to adjust to if you are used to receiving less than seven hours. The following are some tips to help undo the sleeping habits you may already be accustomed to:

Keep a consistent sleep schedule—This will train your body to sleep at a particular time for a certain amount of time.

Limit caffeine and nicotine—Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that can cause restlessness.

Clear your mind—Clearing your mind will help you relax and fall asleep more easily. Before bed, try writing down a checklist of your next day's tasks to help you feel more organized and less anxious.

Take a hot bath—Taking a hot bath 90 minutes before your desired bed time will cause your body temperature to rise and then eventually drop, creating a tired sensation. **EX**

Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

By SSG Heather G. Allen

A Soldier's tour overseas can be extremely difficult. It can be tough spending time away from everything they know and love. On top of that, they're put in situations and observe incidents they may never have encountered before. Some are exciting, but others can be very difficult to bear.

Strong reactions to a traumatic event can lead to an anxiety disorder known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Fear, confusion and anger are all potential emotions associated with PTSD.

Four common symptoms of PTSD are reliving, avoidance, numbing and feeling keyed-up. Symptoms usually start soon after the event, but may not begin for months or even years after. Also, symptoms can come and go over the years. If they last more than four weeks and interfere with day-to-day functioning, there's a strong chance it's a case of PTSD. Those who have it need to seek professional assistance.

The reliving symptom is when memories of the event come back to the Soldier, and they experience the same feelings they felt then, or feel they're reliving the situation. This is also known as a flashback.

The avoidance symptom occurs when they try to steer clear of situations or people that trigger memories of the event. They may even try not to talk or think about it.

With the numbing symptom, they find it hard to express their feelings, which can be another way to avoid memories. The keyed-up symptom is when they're constantly on alert for danger.

PTSD can affect family members as much as the Soldier, because it can change how the Soldier treats their loved ones. The Soldier may also have problems in intimate relationships and close friendships, because it interferes with trust, emotional closeness, communication, responsible assertiveness and effective problem solving.

Some things that can help the Soldier with PTSD are companionship and a sense of belonging, which can act as an antidote to isolation. Ways those with PTSD can create and maintain relationships include:

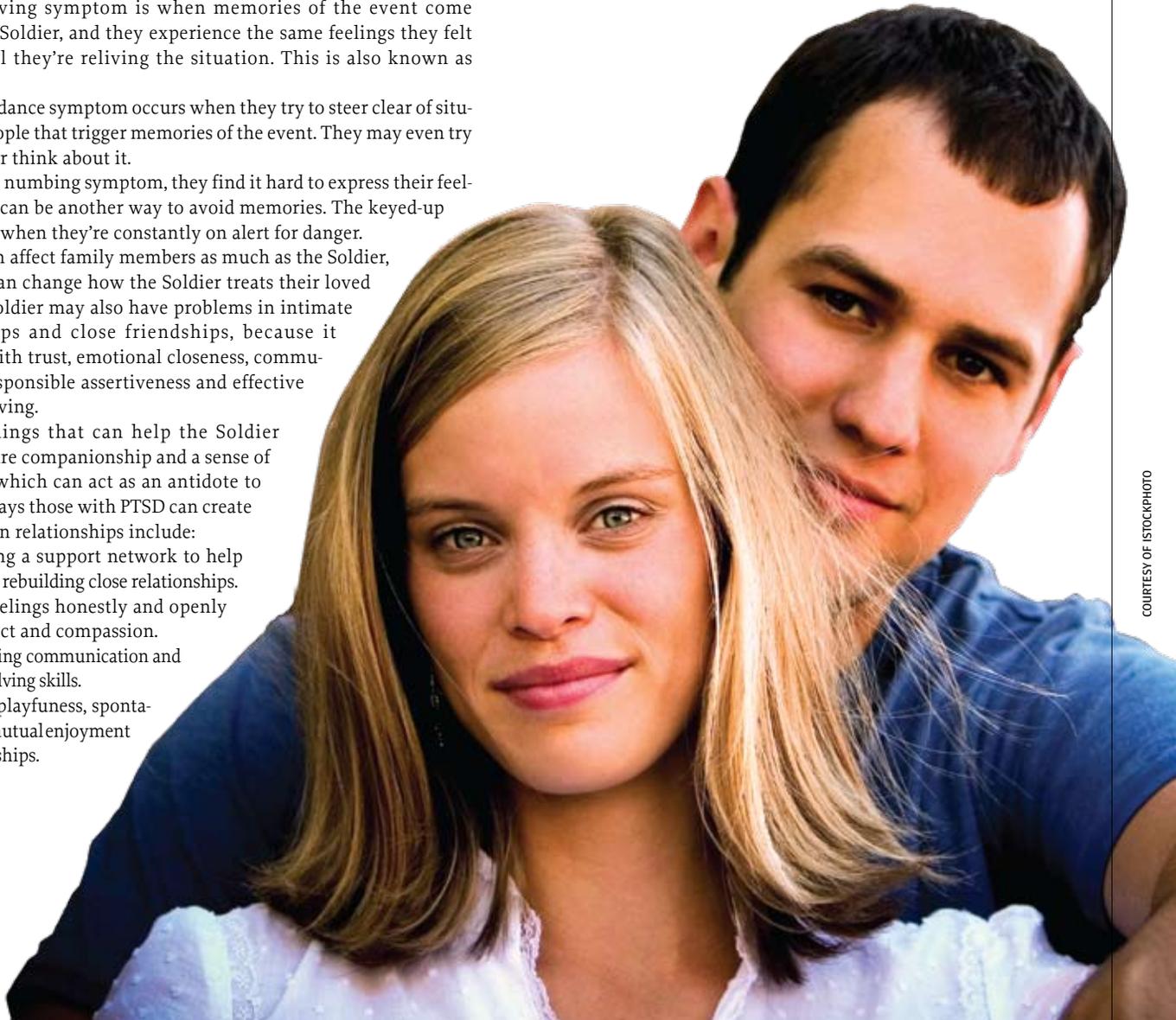
- * Establishing a support network to help cope while rebuilding close relationships.
- * Sharing feelings honestly and openly with respect and compassion.
- * Strengthening communication and problem-solving skills.
- * Including playfulness, spontaneity and mutual enjoyment in relationships.

There is hope for those with PTSD. Good treatment is available, including counseling and medication. VAs and Veterans Centers offer help. Call the VA Health Benefits Service Center toll-free at (877) 222-VETS.

Helpful professional treatments include individual and group psychotherapy, anger and stress management, assertiveness training, couples communication classes, family education classes and family therapy.

For more information, visit the National Center for PTSD's Web site at www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp. The center also recommends the following books:

- * "Recovering from the War: A Woman's Guide to Helping Your Vietnam Vet, Your Family, and Yourself" by Patience Mason
- * "Vietnam Wives: Facing the Challenges of Life with Veterans Suffering Post Traumatic Stress" by Aphrodite Matsakis **GX**



COURTESY OF ISTOCKPHOTO

Tailor Your Benefits to Suit You

Courtesy of USAA

Day One of your first real job—you're looking good and feeling great. Until you get to Stop One on Day One—employee orientation and a swarm of choices about health insurance, retirement plans, tax deductions, and life and disability insurance.

"The first day is scary because you have some formidable decisions to make," says Abby Croshaw, a 23-year-old analyst with the U.S. Census Bureau. "You try to act all confident. But in reality, you don't have a clue no matter how much the human resources guys try to dumb it down."

Don't want to feel like you're the only one confused? Ask questions. Mull over the info. Study the benefits section of your company's Web site, if it has one. And use the guide on the right to help you custom-fit the top benefits offered at most companies.

HMO (HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATION)

With this plan, you will probably pay less when you have medical services done, but you must see one of the doctors on the list to get any benefit. These plans typically cost more from your paycheck. You'll pay a premium, or flat monthly fee, and have little or no deductible, which is the amount you pay before your insurance will cover a portion of your medical costs.

PPO (PREFERRED PROVIDER ORGANIZATION)

Although this plan is usually more expensive than an HMO, you'll have more flexibility in choosing doctors.

LOW PREMIUM/HIGH DEDUCTIBLE PLANS

They protect you from unexpected bills if you're injured in an accident or become seriously ill. However, you pay out of pocket for your routine care, such as doctor's visits, prescriptions and flu shots.

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

You can set aside tax-free money from each paycheck to pay for routine health expenses, like eyeglasses and prescriptions. But be careful not to commit more to the account than you need. If you don't spend the money in the account by the end of the year, you lose it.

VISION AND DENTAL COVERAGE

Compare the premiums with what you need. If you don't wear glasses and only get an annual dental exam, you probably can do without coverage. If root canals are in your future, see if paying for it from a flexible spending account is a better deal. **GX**



COURTESY OF ISTOCKPHOTO

	GETTING FITTED	THE CUT	SIZING IT UP
Health Insurance	<p>Just because you're healthy, don't pass up the chance to sign up for health insurance if your employer offers it. "No matter what, get health insurance," says Kelli Kolsrud with the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans. "You may think you don't need it. But if you're in an accident, it could take years to pay off medical bills." Details of a company's health insurance plan can vary widely. Some offer few choices, while others are more flexible.</p>	<p>Newspaper reporter Shauna Watkins, 24, turned to her parents. "I'm pretty healthy, so they helped me settle on a plan that provides the basics at a low premium, but that also means I have a high deductible," says Watkins.</p>	<p>"Before signing up, talk to your co-workers about the coverage," says Croshaw. "Ask things like, 'How's the dental plan and is it worth it?' You can't beat information from people who are more experienced than you are."</p>
Taxes	<p>Determining how many allowances you should claim on your W-4 form can be confusing. But this will be one of the first forms you're asked to complete. Don't panic. Do your homework.</p>	<p>Basically, the more allowances you claim on the form, the less tax is withheld. If you're like most recent grads who are single with simple lives, putting "1" may be the best choice.</p> <p>Still confused? Go to the IRS with holding calculator on irs.gov.</p>	<p>"I'd rather overpay taxes during the year and have a refund than worry about having enough cash to pay a tax bill later," says Rob Bruder, a 23-year-old associate consultant at a computer software company.</p>
Retirement	<p>When you barely have two nickels to rub together, it may seem ridiculous to plan for 40 years from now. But enrolling and saving now (even a little) is a good idea. "Because of the way interest compounds over the years, even putting in small amounts up front can leave you with more than if you wait till you're in your 40s to save, says Croshaw.</p> <p>Most employers offer some sort of retirement plan, such as a 401(k), which allows you to set aside a percentage of your salary before taxes are taken out.</p>	<p>To sweeten the pot, many employers match your contributions, up to a certain percentage of your salary. "At least participate up to the point where you take advantage of your company's match. It's free money," says Jon Dooney of the Society for Human Resource Management.</p>	<p>"Sign up before your first paycheck," advises Croshaw. "I don't really miss the money because I never had it in my paycheck."</p>
Life and Disability Insurance	<p>Most employers provide some form of life and disability insurance at no cost to employees. "Like a lot of employers, my company offered life insurance coverage as part of my overall insurance package, so I signed up," says Bruder. "Why not? It was free."</p> <p>Typically, life insurance is group term insurance, explains Kolsrud. That means if you die, your beneficiaries (in your case, probably your parents) receive the death benefit, often some multiple of your annual salary. When you leave the company, the coverage stops.</p> <p>Some companies offer more coverage for an additional cost. People who aren't married and have no children and few debts probably are safe with the basic policy the company offers, says Kolsrud. Disability insurance replaces a portion of your income if you can't work because of illness or injury. If you get in an accident that keeps you from working for six months or more, disability coverage could be your financial life preserver.</p>	<p>Since most employers offer life and disability coverage at no cost, there's really no decision to make. However, check with a financial professional to see if the company's basic policy covers your individual needs and whether you should sign up for additional coverage.</p>	<p>"I wish I had asked more questions about it," says Croshaw. "I knew we had some standard form of life insurance, and I didn't even check to see if I needed or could get more coverage."</p>

The 1/34th BCT Back on Home Soil

By CPT Paul Rickert

After 22 months deployed away from their families, the Soldiers of the 1/34th Brigade Combat Team made it home. Throughout July, more than 5,000 soldiers flew into Fort McCoy, WI, and other mobilization centers to demobilize and then travel by bus and plane to their hometown armories.

Demobilization at Fort McCoy takes about five days, during which time Soldiers turned in weapons and gear and filled out paperwork that would process them out of the active-duty Army. During the process, Soldiers are not allowed to see their families, in order to expedite the process. But that didn't stop soldiers from calling their families as soon as they arrived on U.S. soil. "Cell phones are the greatest invention ever," said SGT Matt Richter. "We all started calling everyone immediately."

"What we're doing at the demobilization side of the house is reversing what we did two years ago," said MAJ Mary L. Tomko. "We're taking the Soldiers out of that combat mode, out of the combat mind-set."

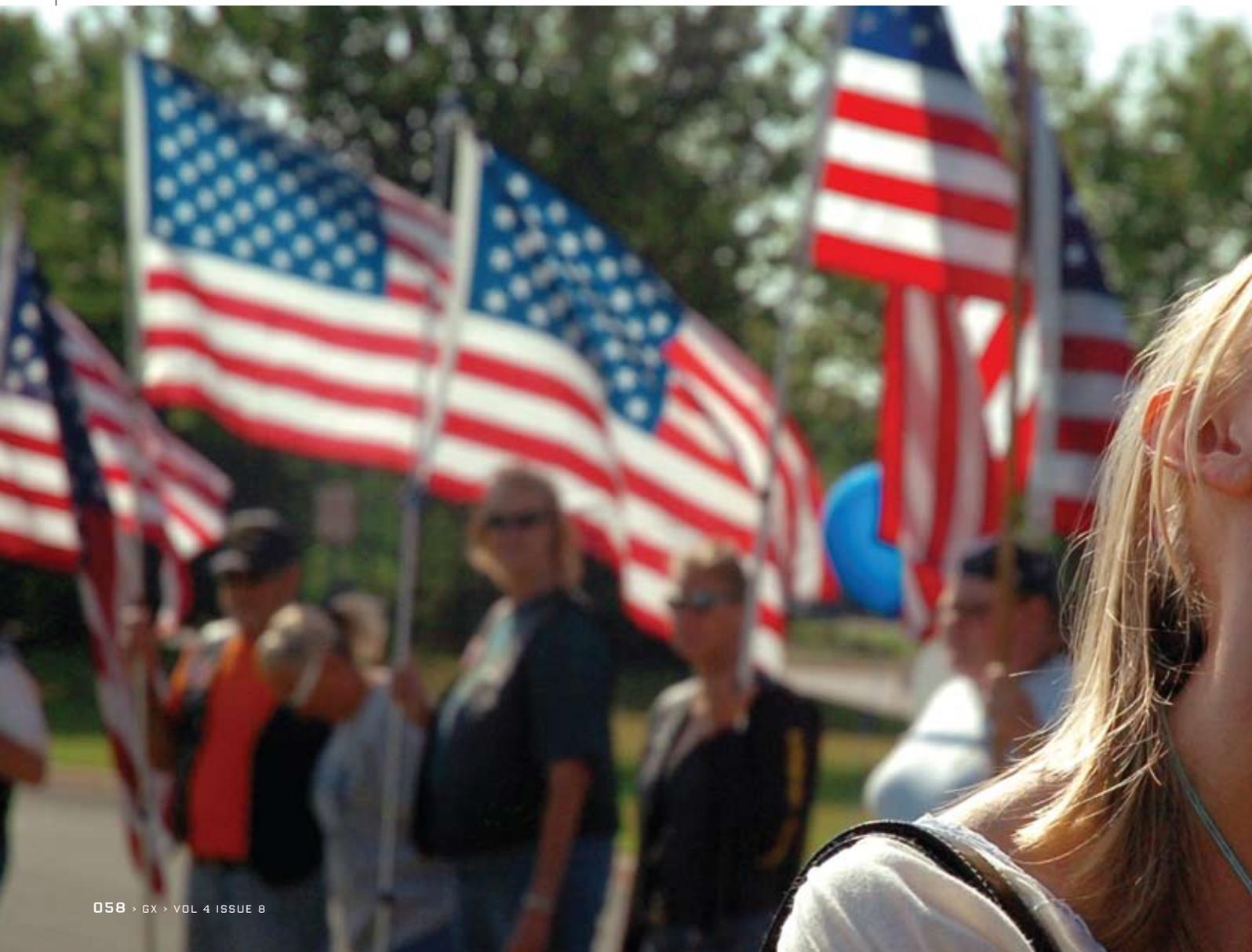
That's no small task for Soldiers who have been away from home as long as the 34th BCT. After 18 months in a combat zone, it will take a while for Soldiers still attuned to reacting to combat to relax.

The Minnesota-based unit included more than 2,600 Minnesota National Guard troops and consisted of National Guard units from more than 38 states, Regular Army and Army Reserve Soldiers.

Demobilization over, a long bus or plane ride awaited each Soldier as they traveled to their final destination. Broken up by unit, each group that arrived back was treated to a hero's welcome with a procession of police and emergency vehicles to an area with waiting family and friends. Relief could be seen on the face of every Soldier as they stepped off the bus—they were home.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 34th Infantry Division (1/34th BCT) Desert Bulls deployed to Iraq in March 2006 for a 12-month tour to conduct theater security in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2006-2008. Before that, the BCT had spent six months of training at Camp Shelby, MS.

In January the unit received new orders extending its tour by four months. That extension made the 1/34th BCT not only the largest deployment from Minnesota since WWII, it also made it the unit with





the highest number of consecutive days (more than 16 months) in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

MINNESOTA LEADS THE WAY ON REINTEGRATION

Now returned home to their families, the soldiers face the challenge of transforming back into the civilians they once were. Minnesota is leading the way in this area by establishing the 'Beyond the Yellow Ribbon' program. The Minnesota National Guard has pioneered a program designed to change how Soldiers are reintegrated back to their communities, jobs, schools and family.

"How we treat the Soldiers when they come home and how we have treated their families as they are here is of utmost importance," said MG Larry Shellito, the adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard.

The "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" program is named as a reminder that the support of Soldiers cannot end when they return from deployment and the yellow ribbons are untied. Each unit will gather for one day of specialized training, workshops and seminars at approximately 30, 60 and 90 days after it returns.

The initial Reintegration Training at Fort McCoy connected Soldiers to service providers who could assist them in overcoming the challenges of reintegration through briefings and a workshop format. It also enrolled every Soldier in the Veterans Administration and informed the Soldiers of their Veterans benefits.

After 30 days, the Soldiers and families will be given the opportunity to reconnect with service providers through workshops and round-robin stations, allowing for more personal contact with service providers. At 60 the Soldiers will attend classes that address negative behaviors related to combat stress. And finally, after 90 days, the Soldiers will be given a thorough Post-deployment Health Re-assessment (PDHRA) for combat veterans.

"We want to make sure that the transition from combat Soldier goes well," COL Kevin Gerdes, director of personnel for the Minnesota National Guard, said regarding the program.

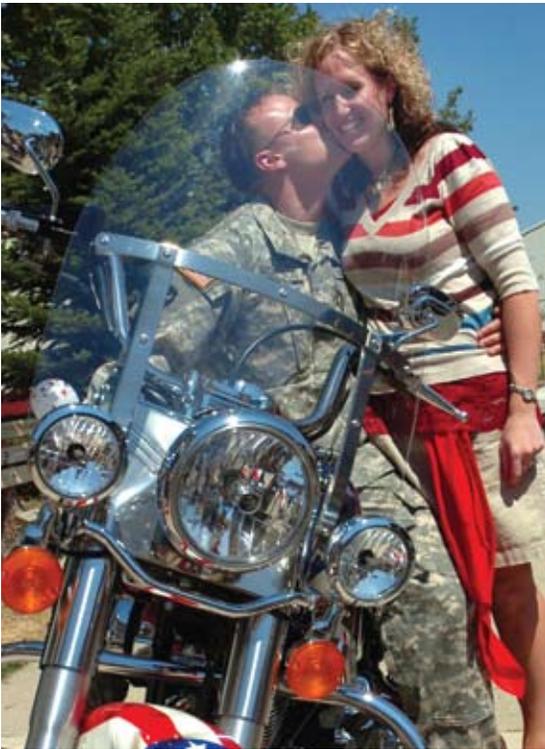
The program does not simply focus on the Soldiers, however. The Minnesota National Guard also conducted Family Reintegration Academies and Community Reintegration Training.

The Family Reintegration Academies prepare family members of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, for the homecoming of their Soldiers, and inform them of what they can do to make this transition as easy as possible. The academy was established to increase the family members' knowledge of the reintegration process, and to provide resources to them as they go through the steps of reintegration.

Community Reintegration Training educates community leaders about challenges of reintegration, and what they can do to help combat veterans and their families successfully reintegrate back into the community. **GX**

SGT LYNETTE HOKE, SGT BEN HOUTKOOPER AND MN NG PAO







1/34TH BCT ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDED:

- ★ Longest-deployed unit in Operation Iraqi Freedom (16 months).
- ★ Best BCT at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) in three years.
- ★ Drove more than 4,500 (round trip) convoy escort missions.
- ★ Drove more than 2.2 million convoy miles for all missions.
- ★ Discovered hundreds of IEDs before they detonated.
- ★ Increased Equipment Readiness Rate from 72 percent to 98 percent.
- ★ Ensured all convoy vehicles were Level I (highest class of armored vehicles available).
- ★ Re-enlisted more than 1,100 soldiers (\$17 million in bonuses).
- ★ Increased FM radio coverage from 73 percent to 100 percent despite closing of old radio towers.
- ★ Conducted hundreds of joint patrols with Iraqi security forces.
- ★ Provided a Military Training Team (MiTT) for an Iraqi battalion in Al Anbar.
- ★ Supported 940,000 Web hits on www.redbullweb.com.
- ★ Completed 107 reconstruction projects worth \$11 million.
- ★ Planned and funded 67 additional reconstruction projects worth \$22 million.
- ★ Built or upgraded seven reverse osmosis water purification plants providing clean water for tens of thousands of Iraqis.
- ★ Built 90 miles of roads in Dhi Qar.
- ★ Cleaned 500 kilometers of roads using an innovative “Adopt a Highway” program to disrupt IED concealment.
- ★ Increased potable water satisfaction in Dhi Qar by 22 percent.
- ★ Increased electricity satisfaction in Dhi Qar by 40 percent.
- ★ Produced 28 television documentaries (more than 23 hours) on our reconstruction efforts that were broadcast on two Iraqi stations.



IN FOCUS SSG Russell Klika armed with one of his cameras.

COURTESY OF SSG RUSSELL KLIKA

From the Frontlines to Headlines

Alabama Guard, Others Get Top-Notch Public Affairs Training

By SSG Heather Allen

The editors at *GX* rely heavily on each state and territory’s public affairs office (PAO) to be our eyes and ears on the ground, which allows us to produce a high-quality magazine for our readers. Along with PAOs, we utilize mobile public affairs detachments (MPADs) and each unit’s public affairs representative (UPAR), as well as individual Soldiers.

First Army has developed a training program at Fort Dix, NJ, to teach ready-to-deploy units the best way to use the equipment they have, and how to get their stories and photos out—not only as hometown news releases, but also on a national level. The course is taught by combat Veterans and seasoned Soldiers with public affairs backgrounds.

SSG Russell Klika, a Tennessee Army National Guard (TNARNG) Soldier, is the program’s 46Q (photojournalist) instructor. The first day I sat in on his class, I noticed that he was quick to give his Soldiers praise and tell them “Good job!” And when they could have done something better, he would take them through the steps to show them what skills and concepts they could work on in their next assignment.

Sometimes he offered simple critiques such as, “You should have taken a vertical shot” or “Next time turn your camera this way; the shadow is in a bad spot.” The Soldiers listened to the critiques and adjusted fire. They all had a certain admiration for SSG Klika. Who wouldn’t admire a man who deployed to Iraq for two years in a row?

When I traveled to Fort Dix, NJ, to get some hands-on experience at the class, the 131st MPAD, Alabama Army National Guard (ALARNG), was going through the two-week course. The 131st had previously conducted rotations in Kosovo and Hungary. They also deployed after hurricanes Ivan, Rita and Katrina. They are now the PAO for Central Command, with some Soldiers stationed in Tampa, FL, and the rest in Qatar. Those in Qatar are running missions all over the CENTCOM AOR (central command area of responsibility) and the ones in Tampa will rotate with them about halfway through their deployment. ▶▶



INFORMATION RELAY SGT Brandon M. McCarty listens to the radio during a simulated convoy attack as a part of mobilization training given by 1st Army Public Affairs at Fort Dix, NJ, May 3, 2007. McCarty is assigned to the 131st Mobile Public Affairs Detachment from Montgomery, AL.

Photojournalism isn't the only class in this program, however. They also have the 46R (broadcaster) course, taught by SSG Nikki Prodromos. She is also a combat Veteran and a TNARNG Soldier. I was able to sit in on the AAR (after action review) they did with the unit at the end of the course and it was plain that her Soldier-students had incredible respect and admiration for her. There was never a question about her competence, only praise for her knowledge of broadcasting and ability to teach.

There's also a section of the course for leadership in the unit, such as the commander and first sergeant. This portion is taught by rLT Frink, a Reservist from Pennsylvania. She teaches guidance, reinforces MDMP (military decision making process) and focuses on training the leaders for the mission. She shows them how to engage the media and incorporates real-world training.

All Soldiers going through the course echoed one particular sentiment—they liked learning from fellow Soldiers who had so much experience. PFC David Choi, who had just returned from school, said, "It's good to see how they do it in the real world and get hands-on training."

On the second day I was there, the Soldiers the current program participants were replacing at CENTCOM came to New Jersey from Florida to brief them on what to expect in the next year and what their mission would be. This is a newer concept—most units wonder until their boots are on the ground what they will be doing. They try to

have the outgoing unit come to give this same type of briefing to all public affairs units that are deploying.

The instructors are proud of their school. This is a new concept and, because they're Veterans, they never received this type of training before they left. They're happy to help these units, knowing it will get more stories out when the units are deployed.

"They are getting the tools they need to do their job—bottom line," said SSG Klika.

SSG Prodromos said, "I really feel fortunate to be a part of this mission because I am very passionate about giving broadcasters the training that I didn't get."

On the last day of training with the First Army team, SSG Klika pulls the journalists aside and gives them some final words of advice. He advises them to become passionate about their photographs and stories. He tells them that although they're journalists, to always remember that, when in combat, they're Soldiers first.

At this point SSG Prodromos interjects with an example of what SSG Klika is talking about. She tells about a time when she had to put down her camera and hold a pistol toward some insurgents they had captured because everyone else was busy. She had to put aside her mission of documenting events and jump back into Soldier mode for a moment, watching the enemy to make sure they didn't get away.

Soldiers in this program are learning to excel at public affairs and to record history. **GX**

DOCUMENTATION Klika photographs an American Soldier during OIF in 2006.





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COMMEMORATION Representatives from eight states and one district that had National Guard Soldiers engaged in the Battle of Fort Stevens march out of the fort on their way to the Battleground National Cemetery during the commemoration ceremony.

The Battle of Fort Stevens How the National Guard Saved Washington, DC

Story and photos courtesy of Jason Hall
Director of the National Guard Educational Foundation (2003-2007)

Millions of tourists visiting Washington, DC's military memorials each year fail to visit the only battlefield actually located in the district: Fort Stevens. The Battle of Fort Stevens literally saved the city.

During the American Civil War, the Confederate Army attempted to raid the United States capital. (See *GX* volume 4, issue 6, or visit GXonline.com/past_issues.) However, ardent Union forces—comprised almost entirely of National Guard Soldiers—heavily contested the attack.

In spring of 1864, the war was beginning to turn against the South. Between May and June, the Confederate Army, under GEN Robert E. Lee, was in Virginia, engaged in the Overland Campaign against the Union Army, commanded by GEN Ulysses S. Grant. Though the Union Army suffered heavy casualties during these battles, GEN Grant pushed on toward Richmond, the Confederate capital.

Due to his staggering losses, GEN Grant abandoned his plan to capture Richmond by direct assault. Instead, his army crossed the James River and headed toward Petersburg. Between June 15 and 18, he attacked Petersburg, without success. GEN Lee arrived in Petersburg on June 18, and after four more days of unsuccessful attacks, GEN Grant

led the Siege of Petersburg, which lasted 10 months—the longest siege in American history.

GEN Lee needed to relieve pressure on his forces protecting Petersburg. A plan was developed in which GEN Jubal Early would lead a raid against Washington, DC, to divert Union forces away from GEN Lee's army at Petersburg. Before the war, GEN Early had been opposed to secession. However, after the outbreak of the war, he joined the Virginia Militia and went to Lynchburg to raise three regiments for the Confederate States Army.

On June 12, GEN Early started his march from behind Petersburg northward through the Shenandoah Valley. On July 2, he arrived at Winchester, VA, marched on to Harper's Ferry, WV, and seized the federal stores there. They crossed the Potomac into Maryland at Sharpsburg.

As the Confederates marched through Maryland, they demanded ransoms from some of the towns they passed through, threatening to torch the towns if the ransom wasn't paid. These actions had the effect GEN Lee had hoped for. On July 6, GEN Grant responded to GEN Early's advance through Maryland by dispatching a division, containing 5,000 men, to intercept GEN Early. A few days later, he sent the full corps. However, until those forces were able to meet GEN Early, the only Union force between GEN Early's army of nearly 15,000 soldiers and Washington, DC, was a small group of 2,300 untested Soldiers.

The Union Soldiers fought fiercely to hold their position, but it was only a matter of time before the superior force of nearly 15,000 Confederates gained control of the field.

This force was commanded by MG Lew Wallace, later known for his book “Ben Hur.”

Upon receiving word of the Confederate advance, MG Wallace knew he had to delay the invaders until reinforcements arrived. However, he didn’t know if the target of the enemy was Baltimore or Washington, DC. He decided to mount his delaying action three miles southeast of Frederick, MD, at a small junction near a river called Monocacy. This location seemed the logical place to defend approaches to both cities.

MG Wallace’s plight was somewhat improved when GEN Grant’s first troops arrived. The troops brought the Union force to about 5,800. The combined forces were positioned at the Monocacy when GEN Early’s forces attacked. MG Wallace knew he’d lose this battle, but also knew that if he could hold out long enough for the rest of GEN Grant’s reinforcements to arrive in DC, he could possibly save the nation’s capital.

The Union Soldiers fought fiercely to hold their position, but it was only a matter of time before the superior force of nearly 15,000 Confederates gained control of the field. By late afternoon the Union Soldiers had been dislodged from their positions and were retreating toward Baltimore, leaving behind more than 1,294 dead, wounded and captured. The way to Washington now lay open for GEN Early and his men. However, the tenacious fighting by the Union forces slowed the Confederate force for one very valuable day, which gave other Union regiments time to get into position in and around the forts surrounding the capital.

GEN Early’s force had suffered roughly 800 casualties at the Battle of Monocacy. The next day he and his army marched onward. By midday on Monday, July 11, GEN Early stood inside the District of Columbia, looking at the earthworks of Fort Stevens, Fort Slocum and Fort DeRussey.

MG Wallace’s stiff resistance, costing GEN Early’s men a whole day, gave GEN Grant’s reinforcements just enough time to arrive to reinforce the earthworks that defended the capital. The 25th New York Cavalry had left Petersburg on July 7 and reached Fort Stevens around midnight of July 10. Also on July 7, the 1st and 2nd Divisions of the 6th Corps, under GEN Horatio G. Wright, left Petersburg en route to Washington. A few hours later, GEN W. H. Emory, with part of the 19th Corps just returning from New Orleans to join GEN Grant at Petersburg, were diverted and left Fort Monroe, VA, for Washington.

On July 11, GEN Early’s men reconnoitered the area around Fort Stevens and believed the fort was poorly manned. However, that afternoon, when GEN Early’s men repeatedly tried to find a weak spot in the fort and the rest of the defenses, they found none. When examining the forts at daybreak on July 12, GEN Early realized he’d lost the upper hand. He abandoned the idea of capturing Washington, but planned to fight the Union forces anyway. By nightfall on July 12, the Confederates had been sent into full retreat. The U.S. capital was saved.

Washington, DC, had been both attacked and defended by National Guard Soldiers. The Civil War was truly fought brother against brother. Though the Battle of Monocacy was a tactical defeat for the Union Army, it was a strategic victory. This is clearly admitted by GEN Early himself, who wrote in his report:

“Some of the Northern papers stated that, between Saturday and Monday, I could have entered the city; but on Saturday I was fighting at

Monocacy, thirty-five miles from Washington, a force which I could not leave in my rear; and after disposing of that force and moving as rapidly as it was possible for me to move, I did not arrive in front of the fortifications until after noon on Monday, and then my troops were exhausted.”

GEN Grant echoed this in his report:

“If Early had been but one day earlier, he might have entered the capital before the arrival of the reinforcements I had sent . . . General Wallace contributed on this occasion by the defeat of the troops under him, a greater benefit to the cause than often falls to the lot of a commander of an equal force to render by means of a victory.”

Today, most of the fields that once surrounded Fort Stevens are busy urban streets and stores. Little remains of the district’s only battle site. On July 9, 2005, the National Guard Association of the United States, in conjunction with the National Guard Educational Foundation and the National Park Service, held a ceremony at Fort Stevens to honor the National Guard Soldiers who had fought there.

At the ceremony was COL Michael Harris, Commander, 1st Brigade, 29th Division. This unit traces its lineage to the Stonewall Brigade. Also in attendance was CW4 Dennis Loy, who began his Guard career in the 134th FA from Ohio, which traces its lineage to the 1st Ohio Light Artillery. Thus two Soldiers present were members of units that once fought against each other on that land. They were now brothers at arms.

After the ceremony, the participants marched along Georgia Avenue to the Battleground Cemetery. The Battle of Fort Stevens saw more than 900 killed or wounded, and 41 of the Union Soldiers who fought and died in Fort Stevens’ defense are interred here. Two Civil War-era cannons flank the entrance to the cemetery, which also contains four Union regimental monuments.

The ceremony was held to remind citizens everywhere of the great debt we owe those who put their lives on the line to defend our nation. **GN**



Baseball Bat Choke

By SFC Donnie Moseley
NM NG, CATC

Hello, again. This month we're going to go over "knee mount" or "knee to belly," transitioning to a "baseball bat choke."

First, I'd like to cover a few things. As I said before, I'm a firm believer in MACP (Modern Army Combatives Program). More than anything, it's designed to help

instill the Warrior Ethos. In my mind, nothing defines a Warrior better than willingness to close the distance with the enemy. A Soldier who can't fight is like a dog with no teeth.

Second, people ask me all the time, "Why does the Army teach this technique and not that one?" The answer is, the techniques build on each other. Also, they're very well thought out. For the

most part, every Soldier can accomplish them, not just those athletically inclined.

Lastly, it's not so much about the techniques as it is about the method used to teach them. What I mean is, all the techniques are chain-progressive. "If he does this, I'll do this," and so on. With this article, I'm trying to relay

a concept known as "additional learning," or, as I call it, "Mad Science Theatre." We'll talk more about this next month. Let's train.



Photo 1 From side control, I'm going to place my near-side thumb in my opponent's collar, keeping my knuckles down. My far-side hand is going to grip the pants, keeping the hips down.

Photo 2 In a pushup-like motion, I'm going to slide my knee that is blocking the hip to my opponent's stomach, making sure I posture, and keeping my other knee off the ground and out of reach. I'll pull up on the collar and hips, causing a tremendous amount of pressure.



Photo 3 With my hand that is helping control the hips, I'm going to slide into the collar palm-up. I'm gripping the collar like a baseball bat.



Photo 4 Now I'm going to slide my knee over my opponent's bicep, trapping his arm under the crook of my ankle.

Photo 5 Now I'm going to rotate around my opponent's head, letting my forearms crisscross, leaning toward the side of my arm that's on top, pulling my elbows toward my rib cage. Until next month, train hard. **GX**



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Mears Finishes Fifth at Chicagoland

Story and photos courtesy of Hendricks Motorsports

On July 11, Mears and the No. 25 National Guard/GMAC Chevrolet team were speedy from the start at Chicagoland Speedway.

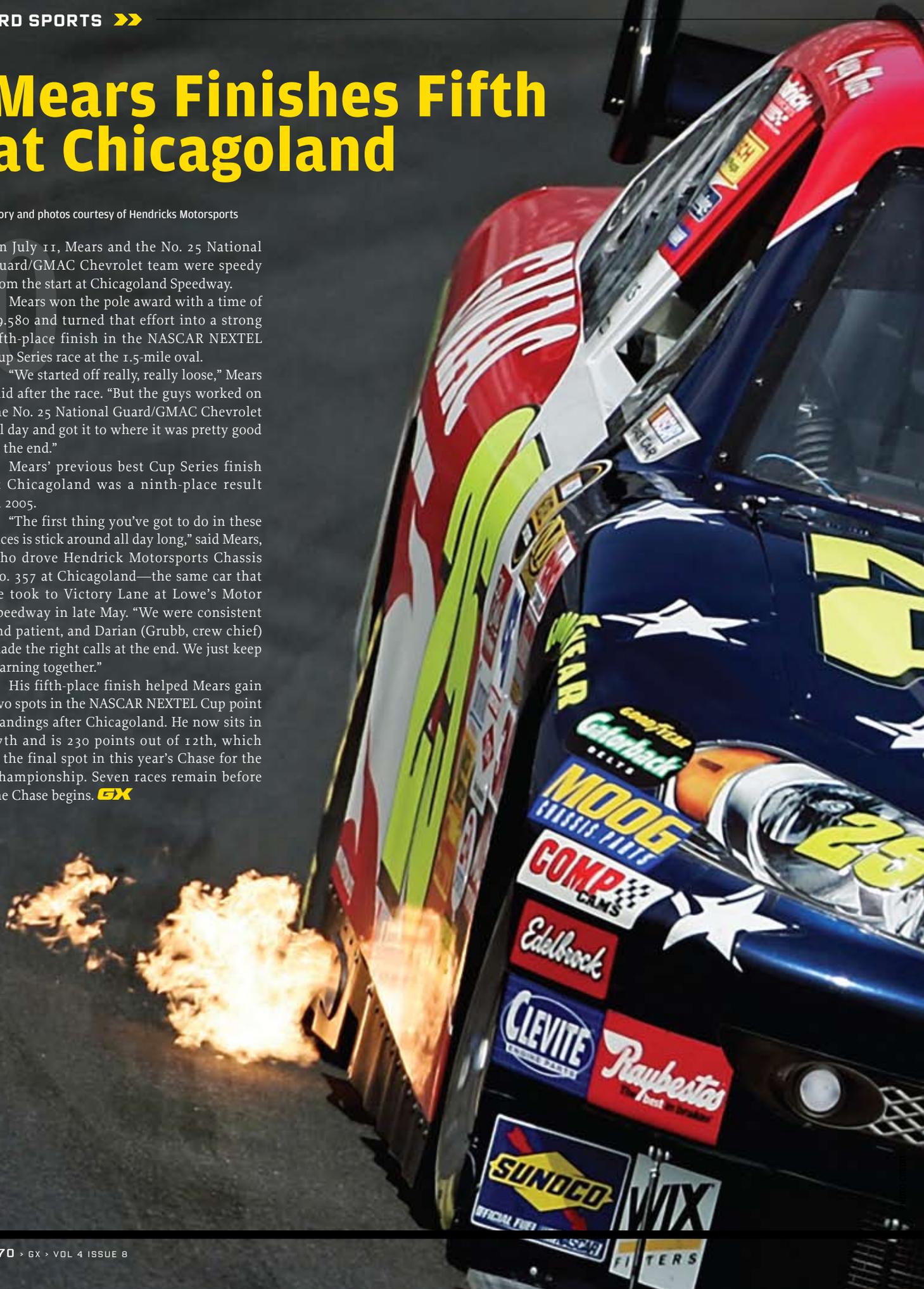
Mears won the pole award with a time of 29.580 and turned that effort into a strong fifth-place finish in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series race at the 1.5-mile oval.

"We started off really, really loose," Mears said after the race. "But the guys worked on the No. 25 National Guard/GMAC Chevrolet all day and got it to where it was pretty good at the end."

Mears' previous best Cup Series finish at Chicagoland was a ninth-place result in 2005.

"The first thing you've got to do in these races is stick around all day long," said Mears, who drove Hendrick Motorsports Chassis No. 357 at Chicagoland—the same car that he took to Victory Lane at Lowe's Motor Speedway in late May. "We were consistent and patient, and Darian (Grubb, crew chief) made the right calls at the end. We just keep learning together."

His fifth-place finish helped Mears gain two spots in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup point standings after Chicagoland. He now sits in 17th and is 230 points out of 12th, which is the final spot in this year's Chase for the Championship. Seven races remain before the Chase begins. **GX**







SPEED RACER Cassill, the Guard's latest driver, and his No. 24 car.

National Guard Car's Newest Driver

Story and photo courtesy of Hendrick Motorsports

EARLY SUCCESS

Landon Cassill, 18, is the newest member of the National Guard's NASCAR team, driving the #24 National Guard Chevrolet Monte Carlo in the Busch Series. Joining forces with Casey Mears, Cassill is blazing his name into racing history.

Cassill was only 3 when he was first introduced to the world of competitive auto racing. His father, Roger, started him on quads, a form of motocross four-wheeler racing, at local tracks in Iowa. Shortly after, Cassill graduated to go-karts, where he found instant success.

At 10, Cassill finished second in the Pro Kart Tour at Atlanta Motor Speedway. The following year, he earned his first of two Kart Series national championships. Cassill finished his kart racing résumé with four International Kart Federation (IKF) championships, on both dirt and asphalt tracks.

In 2000, Cassill competed in three different classes, one in midgets and two in go-karts, winning all three state championships in the same night. The following year, he won four more state championships at the Newton Kart Klub in Newton, IA.

When Cassill moved to midget racing, he demonstrated his dirt track abilities by winning the 2001 IKF National Midget championship. He turned to Legends Cars to satisfy his racing passion. In 2003, his prowess continued to pay dividends when he earned the Hawkeye Downs legend car championship.

At 14, Cassill, already a veteran racer in his home state of Iowa, set a record as the youngest driver to race and win a modified feature event at the famed Hawkeye Downs Speedway in Cedar Rapids. In six races that season, he went on to post five more top-five finishes.

SHIFTING GEARS

While racing modifieds weekly in Iowa during 2003, Cassill began to set his career in motion. The world of American professional auto

racing centered on NASCAR, and that's where Cassill wanted to be. He graduated from the Finish Line Racing School and began making a name for himself in the American Speed Association (ASA).

Cassill, 15 at the time, finished 11th in the final point standings during his first year with the series and improved to sixth the following season. In addition to racing ASA in 2005, he also completed a partial schedule with the Champion Racing Association, where he finished 14th in the series point standings.

WELCOME TO NASCAR

In 2006, Cassill was introduced to NASCAR through the GM Racing Development competition. He was one of 16 drivers to participate in the three-stage evaluation process that took place at Caraway Speedway in North Carolina, North Georgia Speedway in Georgia, and concluded at Nashville Superspeedway.

Cassill's ability caught the attention of Hendrick Motorsports, where he signed as a driver in December 2006.

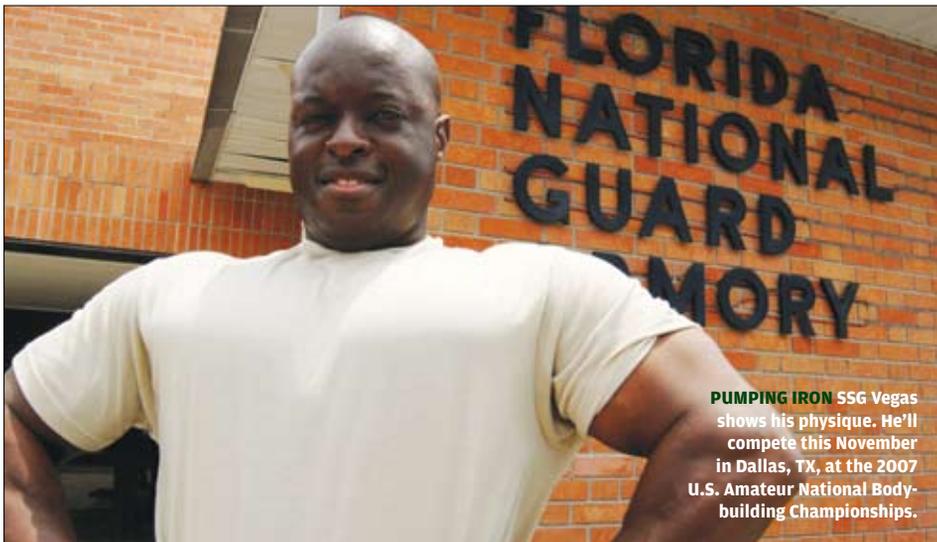
In 2007, Cassill played an intricate role in Hendrick Motorsports' development of the Impala SS, Chevrolet's "Car of Tomorrow" entry in the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series, by testing Lakeland Speedway and Greenville-Pickens Speedway.

Along with his driving duties, he became an employee at Hendrick Motorsports, working with the research and development program at the sprawling racing complex in Concord, NC. He also drives during practices with the Hendrick pit crews and completes rigorous physical training with the company's human performance group.

Born in Cedar Rapids, IA, Cassill currently resides in Charlotte, NC. He graduated early, with academic honors, from Jefferson High School in Cedar Rapids in February 2007. Cassill is also an avid golfer, spending many of his free days on the links. **GX**

Find out more about Landon Cassill at:

www.1-800-GO-GUARD.com/guardracing



Vegas Strong

Story and photo by SSG Thomas Kielbasa, FL NG PAO

There's strong. And there's Army strong. Then there's SSG Willie Vegas strong.

The 40-year-old Florida Army National Guard (FLARNG) Soldier qualified for the 2007 U.S. Amateur National Bodybuilding Championships and is looking to show some serious muscle at the upcoming event in November in Dallas, TX.

SSG Vegas, a squad leader in the 3rd Battalion, 265th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, has competed in amateur bodybuilding competitions since the early 1990s. After taking second place in an all-south championship in Florida last year, he qualified to compete at the national level, and is hoping his sculpted physique will represent the National Guard in the Texas competition.

"Most people think that a bodybuilder is just a 'muscle-head' out there, eating and lifting weights. It's not that at all," SSG Vegas said. "It's a whole lot more than that. There is a lot of thought process that goes into it, as far as strict dieting and proper training. The average person who works out in the gym thinks that the heavier weight you lift, the bigger you get. That is only true to a certain point." Although SSG Vegas trains partly for strength—he can bench-press 420 pounds—he trains primarily to tone his muscles and body shape.

He explained that his bodybuilding regimen consists of dieting and exercise. When preparing for a competition, he eats six to eight small meals per day, and trains four times a week for more than two hours in the gym. Since a competition season runs March through November, he is in training for most of the year to prepare his body. SSG Vegas said he'll weigh between 200 and 250 pounds during the short off-season, but will

diet down to just over 180 pounds before a show.

"I love the sport," he said. "It's very intense and a sport that very few people can endure or understand."

During a typical bodybuilding event, competitors step out on stage in posing trunks and go through a practiced posing routine. Judges look for originality, physique, symmetry, definition and mass.

"You take all of that, combine it into one, go out on stage and you have 90 seconds to prove that you're better than the guy that's next to you," said SSG Vegas, who competes in a light-heavyweight class. "Sometimes it can get pretty intense. First and second place could be the difference between half a point. It's that tough."

But, the difficulties associated with bodybuilding only make the sport more enticing for SSG Vegas, whose body fat during competition is usually between 3 and 5 percent.

"I have numerous first, second and third place trophies," he said, "but nothing compares to the feeling you get of being onstage and knowing what you have gone through to make it to that stage, especially with all the hard work you put into the dieting and the training and sacrifice."

As the weight control officer for his battery, he helps other Soldiers stay fit by bringing his knowledge of body structure, metabolism and bodybuilding to his unit.

Currently, SSG Vegas is seeking sponsorship to attend the November bodybuilding competition in Texas, where he said he can compete with the "best of the best" and possibly move up into the professional circuit.

"My goal is to compete in the professional arena and represent the Florida National Guard, as well as the U.S. military, around the globe," he said. **GX**



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OPERATION TEAM START™

Part 1 of 2
With or Without Weights, Here We Come!

By SSG Ken and Stephanie Weichert

"After he returned from Iraq, he saw his workout business boom," writes Amy Chozik in the *Wall Street Journal* article "Iraq Vets Find Work Shaping Up." "He's one of several Iraq veterans being snapped up by fitness entrepreneurs to run boot-camp workouts, a fad that's been growing in popularity."

Although it's now considered a fad, START Fitness™ has been delivering a military-inspired fitness program to civilians since 1997, well before Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To teach SGT Ken's™ style of boot camp exercise, one must have successfully completed the START Fitness Instructor Certification Course™, a 10-hour day complete with instruction on form, presentation, voice, stage presence and cadence calling. It's a one-day crash course for certified personal trainers on how to become a fitness drill sergeant for a civilian-based program.

However, becoming part of Team START™ is far more complex. Instructors must learn the ins and outs of everything from stacking exercises, aiding an injured participant while still keeping the rest of the class moving, membership retention, marketing, organizational and business techniques, and more. It takes months to fully grasp how to run a boot camp fitness program. That's why the Team START Instructor Certification Program™ is actually an internship for those aspiring to open their own START Fitness™ civilian-based boot camp. It gives instructors the opportunity to learn on the job while still under direct supervision.

We've received several emails asking for instructor variation. Consider this our answer to your request. In the next two articles, we'll introduce you to some of the up-and-coming Team START™ instructors. Together, we'll take you through a small part of what Team START™ delivers to civilians five days a week. We hope you will enjoy the variation, while keeping Fit for Duty.

With or without weights, here we come!



JONATHAN MILLER / ILLUSTRATION BY SEAMAS GALLAGHER, NICOLE SYLVESTER

WEEKS 1-4: OPERATION TEAM START™

NOTE: Internet access required for parts of this series. Go to www.GXonline.com, click on Past Issues, START eFITNESS, and go to issues mentioned below.

MONDAY

START Fitness article, GX 3.4 (p. 73)
Operation Heavy or Not™, Part 1 of 3
“Muscle Exploitation Day”

NOTE: Perform the entire workout.

TUESDAY

START Fitness article, GX 3.5 (p. 76)
Operation Heavy or Not™, Part 2 of 3
“Quadriceps and Gastrocnemius”

NOTE: Perform 1-2 sets of the workout.

START Fitness article, GX 4.7 (p. 73)
Operation Pushing for Points™, Part 2 of 2
“Long Distance Running Day #1”

NOTE: Perform at least two miles of running or jogging.

WEDNESDAY

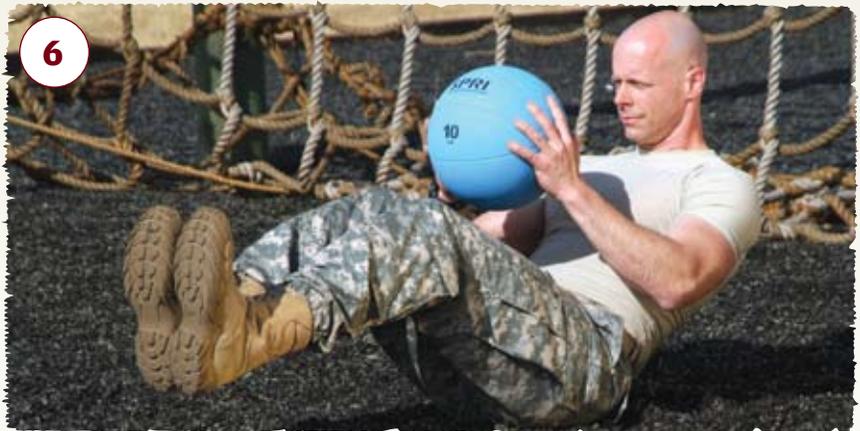
START Fitness article, GX 3.6 (pp. 68-69)
Operation Heavy or Not™, Part 3 of 3
“Big Core No More”

NOTE: Perform the entire workout.

THURSDAY

START Fitness article, GX 4.7 (p. 73)
Operation Pushing for Points™, Part 2 of 2
“Interval Running Day #1”

NOTE: Perform at least two miles of running or jogging.



FRIDAY

WARM-UP PHASE:

1. 5-10 minutes running in place or 50 side-straddle hops—“jumping jacks.”
2. **Rotation Exercises:** 2 minutes
3. **Stretching:** 5-7 minutes
It is advised that you repeat steps 1-3 prior to step 4 in order to be properly warmed up.
4. **High Steps:** 2 minutes
Jogging in place with your hands at least above your shoulders and your knees as high as your hips.

CORE CONCENTRATION PHASE:

5. Flutter Kick

- **Basic:** 10-20 seconds
- **Intermediate:** 21-40 seconds
- **Advanced:** 41-60 seconds

NOTE: Remember that the lower your legs are positioned, the more back muscles you engage for this exercise. Keep your back flat against the floor with your arms supporting the sides of your body. If you experience discomfort in your lower back, raise your legs higher.

6. Russian Twists

- **Basic:** 1-6 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 7-12 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 13-24 repetitions
- **Very Advanced:** Perform more than 25 repetitions with a medicine ball in your hands, legs elevated and bent 90 degrees at the knees, feet flexed and back elevated.

7. Dying Cockroach

- **Basic:** 1-15 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 15-30 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 30-60 repetitions
- **Very Advanced:** Perform more than 30 repetitions with a medicine ball in your hands, legs elevated with no bend in your knees, feet flexed and lined up over your hips, arms straight and hands lined up over your head. As you rise up, the medicine ball should block your view of the sky or ceiling.

8. Superman/woman

- **Basic:** 1-15 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 15-30 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 30-60 repetitions

MUSCLE TARGET PHASE:

9. Squats, or Leaping Squats

- **Basic:** 1-10 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 11-20 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 21-30 repetitions
- **Very Advanced:** Leaping Squats: Jump straight in the air for each repetition. Warning: Do not let your knees bend beyond your toe line. Bring your shoulders and rear end back slightly in order to correct your posture.

10. Static Lunges, or Switch Lunges

Start Position: Start with your left leg on the ground straight in front of you with your left knee slightly bent. Place your right leg straight behind you, balancing on the ball of your right foot on the ground and your upper body is upright.

Action: Slowly lower your body, both knees bending until your forward leg achieves 90 degrees of knee flexion. Maintain your balance in the center. Pause, and then slowly return to the starting position.

- **Basic:** 1-6 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 7-12 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 13-24 repetitions
- **Very Advanced:** Switch Lunges: Jump straight in the air in order to switch leg positions. Warning: Do not let your forward knee bend beyond your toe line. Bring your shoulders back slightly in order to correct your posture.

11. Push-ups, or Uneven Push-ups

- **Basic:** 10-20 seconds
- **Intermediate:** 21-40 seconds
- **Advanced:** 41-60 seconds
- **Very Advanced:** Uneven Push-ups: Start Position: Balance your body on your hands and feet with your back forming a straight line. First, place your left hand on a step higher than your right hand. Look forward and keep your feet together or up to 12 inches apart.

Action: While keeping your abdominal muscles tight, drop your body straight down by bending both elbows. Slowly return to the Start Position and con-



tinue. Switch arm positions after you have completed the required amount of time on the designated side.

- **Extreme:** Perform the repetitions slowly while balancing one of your arms on a medicine ball.

Warning: Perform the actions slowly and be certain not to roll off of the medicine ball. Note: This format demands more core muscle strength.

12. Bench Dips

- **Basic:** 1-10 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 11-20 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 21-30 repetitions

13. Pull-ups

Start Position: Place your hands on a pull-up bar, arms shoulder-width apart, and palms facing away from your body.

Action: Pull your body upward until your nose reaches the bar. Return to the start position and repeat the steps.

NOTE: If you cannot perform a complete pull-up, simply hang on the bar for 45 seconds with your arms fully extended.

- **Basic:** 1-2 repetitions or hang on the bar for 45-60 seconds
- **Intermediate:** 3-6 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 7-12 repetitions

SUMMIT PHASE:

14. Jump-Squat-Thrusts

Start Position: Stand upright and ready.

Action: Slowly lower your body, both knees bending until your hands reach the ground. Straighten your body until you assume the push-up position. Quickly



14



bring your knees into your chest, switch your balance to your feet and leap in the air and repeat.

- **Basic:** 1-10 repetitions
- **Intermediate:** 11-20 repetitions
- **Advanced:** 21-30 repetitions
- **Extreme:** 31-40 repetitions

15. 8-10 Minutes aerobics (treadmill, or elliptical machines, or running, or cycle)
“HOOAH! Now do it, again!”

- **Basic:** 1 full set = approximately 30 minutes *
- **Intermediate:** 2 full sets = approximately 60 minutes *
- **Advanced:** 3 full set = approximately 90 minutes *

* Depending on initial warm-up time, repetitions per set and rest periods. The Warm-up and Cool-down Phases are performed only once. Intermediate and Advanced participants may choose to perform the Core Concentration, Muscle Target, and Summit Phases two or more times.

COOL-DOWN PHASE:

16. Rotation Exercises (2 minutes)

17. Stretches (5-10 minutes)

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

- Light stretching and plenty of rest.
- Repeat weekly fitness plan three additional times in order to complete the month.

REMARKS: Ken Weichert, a.k.a. “SGT KEN™”, is intentionally pictured in the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) without the ACU Jacket while demonstrating exercises for Operation Team START™. Mr. Weichert’s uniform is not in accordance with Army Regulation 670-1, Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia, dated 3 February 2005.

The START Fitness™ instructors and students pictured in this article are not members of the Army National Guard. START Fitness™ is a group exercise and hiking business based in San Francisco where Soldiers and Civilians can experience the thrill of military-style drills performed in cadence, or with music. START Fitness™ now trains and certifies Basic, Senior, and Master Instructors.

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SSG Ken Weichert, six-time Soldier of the Year and Veteran of both Iraqi Freedom and Desert Storm, began the START Fitness™ program in 1997. Now partnered with his wife Stephanie, strategic director of START Fitness™ and a certified personal trainer, the Weicherts are conquering the fitness industry.

SPECIAL REMARKS: We encourage you to send your questions or requests for additional information to askthetrainer@STARTfitness.com. You can experience our workouts at home with our OPERATION LIVING FIT™ DVD series available on sale at www.STARTfitness.com or <http://www.americansoldier.com/skwo01.html>.

WARNING: Always seek the advice and guidance of a qualified health provider with any questions or concerns you may have prior to commencing a fitness program. This article should not be relied on or substituted for professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The exercises presented are for suggestion only. Participate at your own risk. Stop if you feel faint or short of breath.

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50 Ways to Lose Your Luggage



ARMED AND READY The case on the left was no match for the firepower of a shotgun (above).

SHINY AND NEW (below) Three of the cases, factory-fresh, before they were subjected to the wrath of the West brothers.

by Chris and Jason West

We got the idea for this story when we heard about a Pelican case surviving a helicopter crash and two Maverick Missiles subsequently fired into the crashed vehicle. Apparently, the contents of the case, when later recovered, were intact and functional.

Now, we're not ones to doubt a Soldier's word (with the obvious exception of our own CPT Tim), but we just had to test these cases for ourselves.

Since we can't have a contest with just one contender, we sought out the top manufacturers of this uber-baggage to find some competition for Pelican. Hardigg Storm Case and Seahorse fit the bill nicely, having similar pricing and product claims.

Now for the fun part: destroying, um . . . we mean, testing the products. Unfortunately, our publisher was too stingy to spring for a helicopter (cheap @&#;\$%@*) and Maverick Missiles, so we had to find some other way to put these cases through the wringer.

DROWN IT!

Ever see "Joe Versus the Volcano" with Tom Hanks? No? Hardly surprising—it was half of a great movie. Anyway, at one point, Joe saves himself by making a raft out of his luggage. Luggage as a flotation device? Sounds like a good idea to us.

We hauled the cases out to the lake, found a few oars and made a laughable attempt at a suitcase regatta. As it turns out, even the smallest of these cases is incredibly buoyant—but almost impossible to balance on and row.

After several hours of our favorite lake games, like "Drown the Intern," "Hit the Intern With an Oar" and "How Long Can the Intern Hold His Breath With My Boot on His Neck," we dragged the cases back onshore to see if the gear inside was dry. The Storm and Pelican were bone dry inside—not a single drop of water. The Seahorse didn't fare so well, with noticeable leakage, particularly at the corners.

CHUCK IT!

The minimum drop-test standard involves having the case, with a designated amount of weight inside, fall on concrete from the staggering height of one meter. Gimme a friggin' break. Three whole feet? That's just not gonna do. Fortunately, GX's offices are located on the third and fourth floors, with windows overlooking pavement.

Test No. 1 was a freefall from the third floor. All three brands held up nicely. Test No. 2 was a freefall from the fourth floor. This time one of the latches on the Seahorse popped



CPT TIM W. IRVIN / EVAN BAINES



GETTING READY (bottom left) David Michaels of Knob Creek Machine Gun Shoot prepares to unleash a torrent of fire on several cases.

BURST OF FLAMES (top left) Michaels takes a flamethrower to a trio of cases, none of which stood a chance.

UP A CREEK (bottom right) GX's Jason West test the exceedingly buoyant cases by creating a makeshift raft from them. Surprisingly, only one showed any signs of leakage.



open. Wanting a more definitive result, test No. 3 was hurling the cases as hard as possible from the fourth floor window. Pelican and Storm took a little surface damage, but laughed off our best efforts. The Seahorse failed spectacularly, with one hinge breaking and the gear going flying.

SHOOT IT!

You knew it was coming and here it is: then we shot 'em with a shotgun. Surprisingly, there isn't really anything official about how much of a blast from a 12-gauge shotgun these things are supposed to take. We set up the cases with electronic equipment inside (laptops, radios, etc.) and opened fire from about five meters. We started with the same-size shot we used to test sunglasses (GX 4.2), then moved to heavier loads.

The Seahorse failed to protect the stored equipment at even the lightest load. The Pelican allowed enough pellets through at the light load that the equipment took mild damage. Interestingly,

the combination of case and laptop was sufficient to prevent total breach on the medium load. In the end though, the Storm was the clear winner. The light load was absorbed completely by the case and the medium load caused only minor damage to the laptop.

BURN IT!

It's amazing the people you get to know working for a magazine. Take our new friend David Michaels. He has a Class 3 explosives permit, which means he gets to own fun toys like a flamethrower (which, for a fee, he will let you shoot at the next Knob Creek Machine Gun Shoot—www.machinegunshoot.com). You can guess what's coming next for the poor cases: we burned 'em with a flamethrower. Let's be clear—this was complete overkill and in no way a fair test, but who would pass up the chance to do product-testing with a flamethrower? Not us.

Tragically, none of the cases fared as well in the face of a hose spewing liquid fire. As nearly as we could tell, the cases were all breached within 90 seconds. You can check out the destruction at www.GXonline.com to see how it got so ugly so fast.

RATE IT!

All of these cases are comparably priced, so for once, we can make some clear recommendations. First, the only reason to pick a Seahorse is if Pelican and Storm don't make the container size you need. Second, Pelican makes excellent products we've used for years and still wouldn't hesitate to purchase. Finally, though, Storm wins! In addition to excelling in our tests, Storm cases are significantly lighter and have easier-to-use latches. We couldn't drown it, beat it or break it, so we have to recommend it. **GX**



GX Hero: SSG Evenson Turner

A War to Keep Kids Off Drugs



GROUP FORMATION With the Drug Education for Youth Program, SSG Turner is able to have a positive effect on the Arizona community.

By SSG Heather G. Allen

As you make your way through life, you run into scenarios and challenges that can help decide how you'll choose to conduct yourself.

When I spoke with this month's hero, SSG Evenson Turner, he gave me a glimpse into why he chose his profession—Counter Drug Task Force, Missouri Army National Guard. He saves lives with knowledge.

He was born in Riverside, CA, a self-proclaimed Air Force Brat. He never lived in bad areas but there were bad influences in each place he lived. His parents kept him busy with sports and school and were involved in all aspects of his life. They knew all of his friends and their parents.

I asked him about the effect on his life of seeing people use drugs. He replied, "I grew up between Fort Washington, Maryland, and Tucson, Arizona. I saw people doing drugs all around me. This includes friends and family. At times I felt like an outcast because I remained strong in my [belief] that drugs . . . can destroy your goals and dreams.

"I always kept quiet and wouldn't associate with people who used. I kept them at a distance and stayed active in sports, including football, track and martial arts. I've watched people act like a totally different person while intoxicated and I've almost had my life taken by someone under the influence."

SSG Turner said he often asked himself, "What's the point [of doing drugs]?" His friends would tell him, "Hey you have to try this, it is so cool," and later the same day that friend would be in the corner throwing up or blacked out. He's seen children as young as 9 selling drugs.

He stated, "I didn't think that there was anything cool about a person trying to walk through a wall and knocking himself out. There's nothing cool about drunken fights.

"I had a friend [who] no longer has a mother due to his father's alcohol consumption. His father killed her in front of his children. He called his house from the police station and told his daughter to tell her

mother to come get him. He didn't remember that he had taken her life. Some individuals don't view alcohol as being a drug."

"I had a friend who was killed [by] someone who lowered their inhibitions through marijuana use. Seeing the impact on families was enough to keep me from using."

He also had huge supporters at home that kept him focused on the correct path. He credits his mother, Jeanette H. Turner, and father, TSGT (ret.) Evenson Turner, for always being there for him.

SSG Turner joined the Army National Guard in September 2000, after serving four years in the Active Army.

He enlisted to finish his commitment to his country and wanted to stay close to home. Shortly after joining, he heard about the Counter Drug Task Force. "I continue my service to support youth in maintaining drug-free, healthy lifestyles," SSG Turner says.

In December 2000, SSG Turner was hired onto the Arizona Counter Drug Task Force as a Drug Demand Reduction Prevention Specialist. His responsibilities included coordinating community events and logistical support, setting up static displays, conducting mentoring programs and providing drug/gang awareness classes to students in grades K–12.

SSG Turner said, "We also provided classes for faith-based organizations and general community members all over the state. Through the task force, I have been able to speak to thousands of people about the harmful effects of drugs."

When not teaching young people about the dangers of drug abuse, SSG Turner attends weekend drills as a 92G, Food Service Specialist. In October 2004, he was mobilized to Kuwait in support of OIF. When he returned from deployment, he transferred to Missouri National Guard, which placed him on the Counter Drug Task Force.

SSG Turner has also supported non-profit organizations in decreasing drug use by children and adults.

I asked SSG Turner what kept him motivated to do his job.

He stated, "Receiving letters from students [who had attended] my classes who had vowed to stay away from drugs. They appre-

ciate that I share[d] my personal experience dealing with, among other things, peer pressure. I can recall one young lady sending me a letter stating that her boyfriend kept pressuring her into using. The education she received was not only informational, but [helped her learn to say] no and [deter] others. She informed her boyfriend of the toll drugs can take on you. Not only did he stop pressuring her, but he ceased to use as well.”

His most rewarding experience?

“Supporting our mentoring programs, like the Drug Education for Youth Program. With the support of other Guard Soldiers, taking a group of at-risk youth who don’t know one another, and giving them structure and helping them set goals. I love watching those kids become . . . changed individuals. Our camps are like mini-basic training with a drug education focus. We teach drill and ceremonies, teams training/low ropes obstacles, physical training, conflict resolution, [the] importance of education and maintenance of a positive lifestyle.

“By the end the week, we’re watching a group of kids . . . who [had] arrived with this defensive wall up, leave with tears in their eyes because they don’t want to go home. The level of emotion and changed mentality lets us know we’ve made an impact on their life.

“We may have a group of 100 and I may only reach one person. But, knowing I made an impact on one life is a reward in itself. That person may go on to do great things. Too many people, young and old, destroy their lives because of substance abuse.”

SSG Turner has two reasons of his own to keep kids off drugs. Their names are Evenson Anthony Turner and Kalil Christopher Turner. Evenson, 10, says he wants to be just like his dad when he grows up. Kalil Christopher Turner is two.

With all that happens in a parent’s busy day, they should always take time out to see what their kids are doing. Are they choosing the right friends? Have you taught them to do the right thing even when you are not around? SSG Turner had a great piece of advice for all parents . . . “Talk to your children and stay involved.” That is what his parents did and that is what he is doing with his children.

He wouldn’t be where he is today without his loved ones. When I asked what he would say to them about how they have supported him he said, “My whole family respects what I do in the Guard. I love you all and thank you for supporting me.”

In a constant war on drugs, this Soldier is making a difference one person at a time. **GX**

By the end the week, we’re watching a group of kids . . . who [had] arrived with this defensive wall up, leave with tears in their eyes because they don’t want to go home. —SSG Evenson Turner



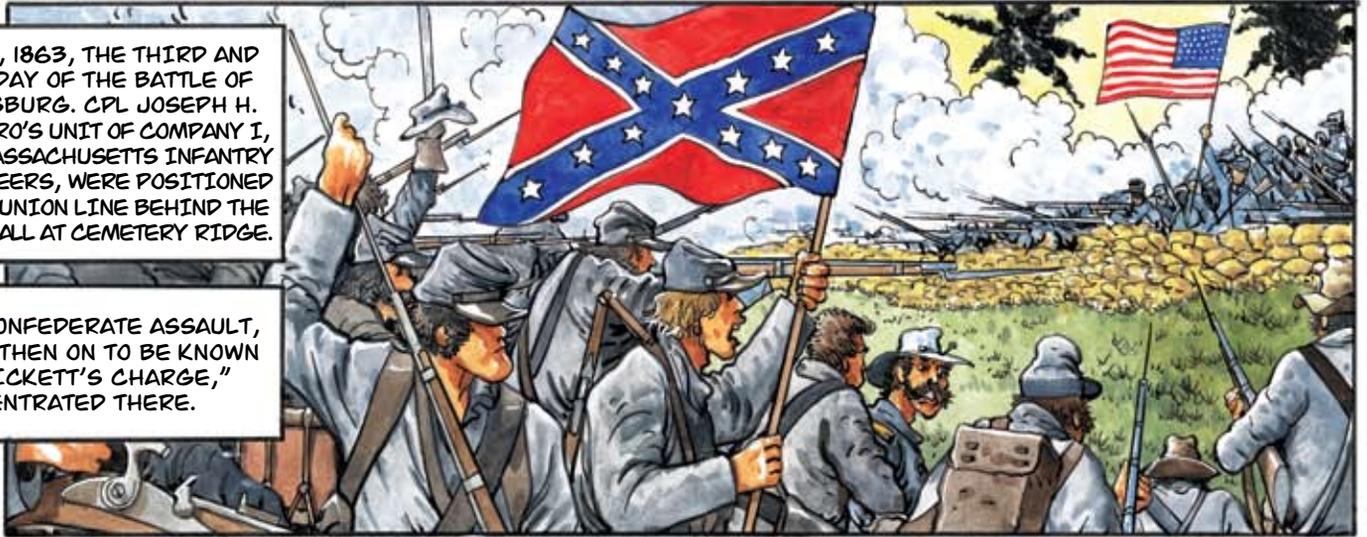
(left to right) **SOLDIER** SSG Turner when he had just arrived in ... **MENTOR** SSG Turner having a one-on-one moment with one of the students in his youth program, which assists giving at-risk youth structure and goals in their lives.

PICKETT'S BATTLE FLAG

LOMAX

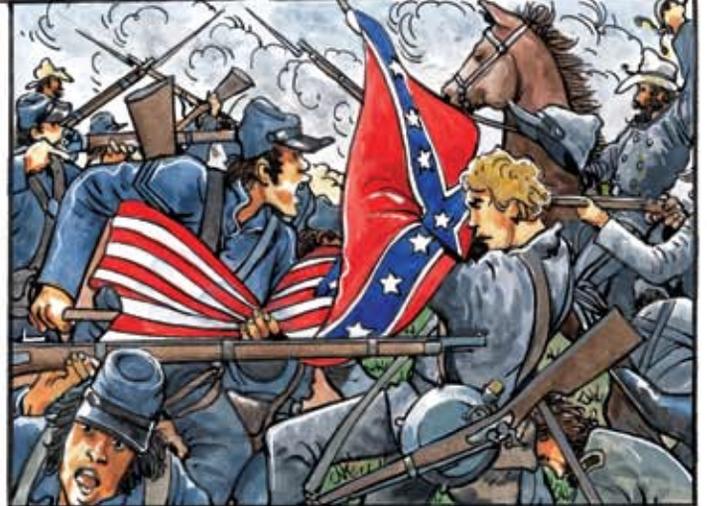
JULY 3, 1863, THE THIRD AND FINAL DAY OF THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG. CPL JOSEPH H. DECASTRO'S UNIT OF COMPANY I, 19TH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY VOLUNTEERS, WERE POSITIONED ON THE UNION LINE BEHIND THE ROCK WALL AT CEMETERY RIDGE.

THE CONFEDERATE ASSAULT, FROM THEN ON TO BE KNOWN AS "PICKETT'S CHARGE," CONCENTRATED THERE.



THE BATTLE WAS ILL-CONCEIVED AND DOOMED TO FAIL FROM THE BEGINNING. UNDER ARTILLERY AND WITHERING RIFLE FIRE FROM GEN MEADE'S BLOCKING FORCE, THE REBELS FELL LIKE WHEAT BEFORE A SCYTHE. ONLY A FRACTION OF GEN PICKETT'S 12,500 TROOPS ENGAGED IN THE BATTLE WERE ABLE TO BREACH THE UNION DEFENSES.

DURING THE FIGHT, CPL DECASTRO CONFRONTED THE CONFEDERATE FLAG BEARER FROM THE 19TH VIRGINIA, IMPALING HIM WITH HIS OWN STANDARD.



CPL DECASTRO DASHED THROUGH THE RAGING BATTLE WITH THE CAPTURED CONFEDERATE FLAG TO PRESENT IT TO HIS GENERAL, ALEXANDER S. WEBB.

WITHOUT A WORD, HE RETURNED TO THE FIGHT. PICKETT'S CHARGE WAS A BLOODBATH FOR THE CONFEDERACY. FOR HIS HEROISM DURING THE BATTLE, CPL JOSEPH H. DECASTRO RECEIVED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR, THE FIRST HISPANIC AMERICAN TO RECEIVE THE MEDAL.



the end